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Lifecycle 2 Vol3 #8 08/01

Next Generation Magazine

# →Next Gen

## GAMECUBE EXPOSED!

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FROM INSIDE NINTENDO:

### LUIGI'S MANSION

ETERNAL DARKNESS  
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STAR FOX ADVENTURES  
WAVE RACE BLUE STORM  
PIKMIN And More!

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**RESIDENT EVIL:  
GROUND ZERO**

PLUS THE LATEST ON:  
**Virtua Fighter 4**  
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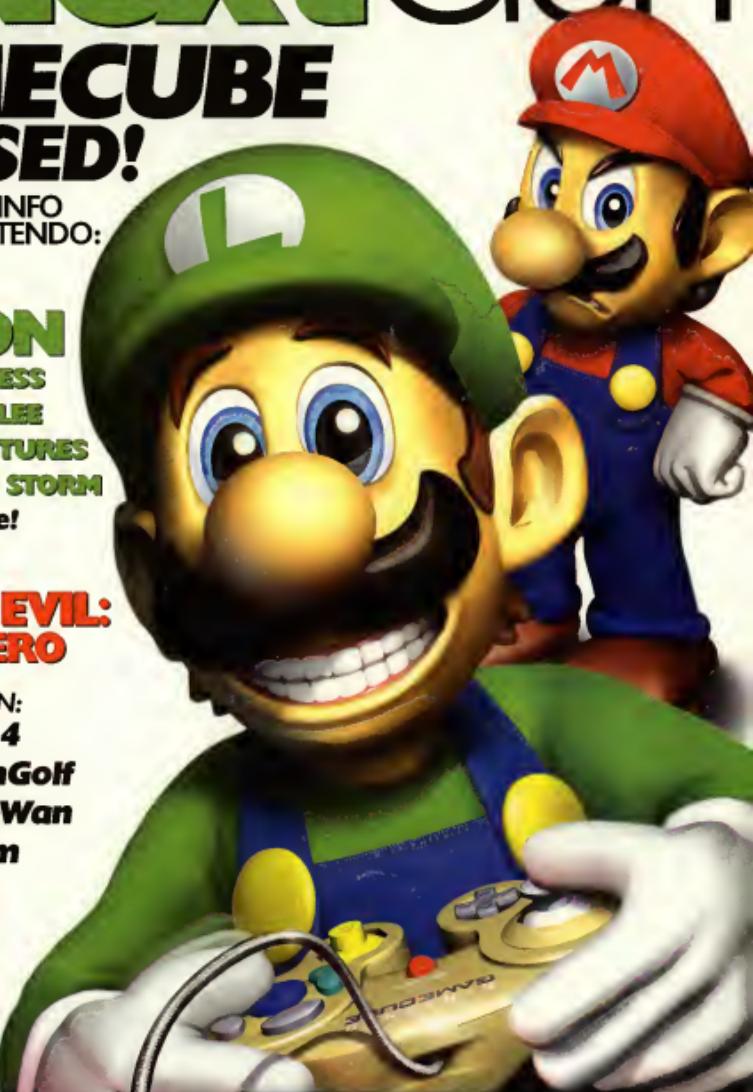
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GameCube ■ Dreamcast ■ PlayStation 2 ■ Arcade ■ Xbox ■ PC



# DARK CLOUD





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ACTUAL SCREEN SHOTS



**MORE REALISM**—PAINSTAKING ATTENTION TO DETAIL, BULLETS EVEN MODELED ACCURATELY, RESULTS IN REALISTIC AND CINEMATIC GAMEPLAY UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE SEEN. EVERYTHING IS DESTRUCTIBLE, AND BONES APART REALISTICALLY. YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED ACTION SEQUENCES WITH THIS LEVEL OF DEMOLITION. —PC GAMER

**BULLET-TIME GAMER**—A FIRST IN GAMING, SLOW-MO GIVES YOU AN INVENTIVE ADVANTAGE OVER YOUR OPPONENT, AND ALSO HAPPENS TO BE THE MOST FRICKIN' COOL DEVICE EVER EMPLOYED IN AN ACTION GAME. —PC GAMER

**FEEL THE PAIN**—STORY IS THE BEDROCK OF MAX PAYNE. YEAH, IT'S CHOCK FULL OF MIND-BLOWING DISPLAY. BUT AT EVERY TURN, A NEW AND CLEVER PIECE OF NOIR STORYTELLING WILL MOTIVATE YOU FORWARD AND ILLUMINATE THE ACTION. —PC GAMER

# MAX PAYNE

EVERYTHING RIPPED APART IN A NEW YORK MINUTE... MAX PAYNE IS A MAN WITH NOTHING TO LOSE IN THE VIOLENT, COLD URBAN NIGHT. A FUGITIVE UNDERCOVER COP FRAMED FOR MURDER. AND NOW HUNTED BY COPS AND THE MDB. MAX IS A MAN WITH HIS BACK AGAINST THE WALL. FIGHTING A BATTLE HE CANNOT HOPE TO WIN. PREPARE FOR A NEW BREED OF DEEP ACTION GAME. PREPARE FOR PAIN... DEVELOPED BY REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT AND PRODUCED BY 3D REALMS, MAX PAYNE IS A RELENTLESS STORY-DRIVEN GAME ABOUT A MAN ON THE EDGE, FIGHTING FOR HIS JUSTICE WHILE UNCOVERING PLOT-TWISTS AND TWISTED THUGS IN THE GRITTY BOWELS OF NEW YORK DURING THE CENTURY'S WORST BLIZZARD.



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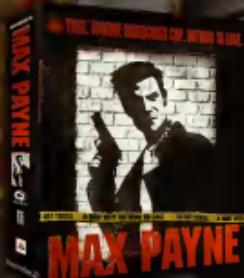
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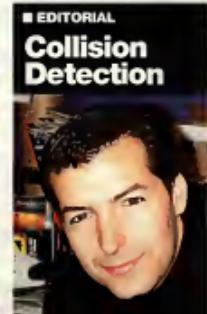
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# 08/01



**Collision Detection**

"Collision detection" is a programming function that has made every game from *Pong* to *Quake* possible. It's simple really. If Object A (ball, rocket) collides with Object B (paddle, Quake Marine) then C occurs (ball changes direction, Quake Marine takes damage).

But fighting games have made a true art (martial, of course) out of the science of collision detection. And in this issue, we're proud to bring you the exclusive first look at *Tekken 4* and an exclusive update on *Virtuo Fighter 4*. Never before have we featured two more highly anticipated fighting games in the same issue.

Although collision detection has brought us this far, physics simulation and advanced AI usher us into the future. The wave propagation physics found in *Wave Race Blue Storm* (page 69) and the AI behind the social dynamics of *Republic* (page 40) prove games are capable of simulating the real world. But they can do so much more than that. The vacuum effect of Luigi's ghost-catcher (page 66) proves that developers can use physics to generate other-worldly experiences that feel, well, real...

Welcome to another issue.

*Tom*  
— Tom Russo



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# →News

Game industry news and analysis



#### ■ OUR REVIEW OF...

## LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER

Paramount Pictures      Rated PG-13  
Starring Angelina Jolie, Jon Voight, Iain Glen  
Directed by Simon West

→ There's nothing more disappointing than having a loved one let you down. And few characters have meant more to gamers than Lara Croft, that brilliant, busty adventurer with a Ph.D., a Pulitzer Prize, and a weakness for lost treasure. Now she's a movie star, and the worst that can be said of *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* is that it's frustratingly mediocre, a

waste of infinite potential.

It's not that it's incompetent or painful to watch. Croft fanatics will find much to celebrate in seeing their beloved icon finally brought to life, battling thugs and robots, or





■ MOVIE S.T.A.R.S.

# On the set of Resident Evil: Ground Zero

The director of *Mortal Kombat* meets Leeloo. Is that cult enough for you?



Any worries that the Resident Evil movie crew was going to be secretive were dispelled within minutes of getting in the car that shuttled us to the film's Berlin location. We should warn you: There are many spoilers ahead.

"The main source of evil in the film is a nine-foot-tall mutant with half its brain exposed and a long animatronic tongue," the driver explains enthusiastically. "The S.T.A.R.S. team are stalked through the whole film by this thing. It just gets bigger and bigger. Plot? Yeah, well, there's this super-computer called the Red Queen. It activates all the emergency systems. I shouldn't really tell you this, but the bad guy steals a vial of the T-virus and tosses it into the base. The halon systems come on. The oxygen disappears. Everyone in the base dies, but is then brought back to life through the virus."

Upon reaching the primarily underground set, the

rest of the crew is equally relaxed. Having emerged for lunch they stampede to the nearby commissary, and it's a bizarre introduction to this new Resident Evil universe. S.T.A.R.S. members are standing in line holding trays. Paul Anderson, the film's writer/director, is nearby discussing the workings of the mind of a 12-year-old. And off to one side, next to her trailer, Milla Jovovich is dancing in the midday sun.

There is little hint of the terror found in Capcom's survival-horror franchise. But as if to assuage such doubts, Anderson takes time to explain his vision. "Our approach to the movie was to treat it as if it were another game," he begins. "I spent six months playing Resident Evil: Director's Cut and just thought it was fantastic."

**Anderson** is absurdly laid-back, his unkempt hair and vivid orange T-shirt giving the 36-year-old the appearance of a much younger man.

"This takes place several months before the first Resident Evil game. The Umbrella Corporation is still the villain and we'll use a lot of the same creatures. Milla plays Alice, a caretaker in the mansion above Umbrella's underground base. In an early scene she's taking a shower and is knocked out by nerve gas. This causes her to lose her memory, and during the film she gets flashbacks at stressful moments. The gas was triggered by the Red Queen, which controls all the systems within the base, and the S.T.A.R.S. team are called in to investigate."

Robert Kulzer, the film's executive producer, continues. "We really wanted to maintain the look of the games," he says. "This meant a lot of searching around for ideal locations. This afternoon I'm going to scout a high-profile bank that will be the interior of an Umbrella office deep underground. Everything is inspired by the

(continued on page 8)



revealing a glimpse of skin while stepping from the shower. But despite a big Hollywood budget, exotic locations, and a perfectly cast Angelina Jolie, Tomb Raider remains slick and empty.

Maybe it's too much to expect something on the level of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or even *Die Hard*, but director Simon West (*Con Air*) pulls too many punches, never quite allowing Lara to fire her Colt .45s in real anger. When a dozen heavily armed commandos attack Croft Manor, it ends with lots of broken dishes and not a single gunshot wound. Ultimately this makes Lara woefully tame compared to Indiana Jones or 007 — or

(continued on page 8)



■ Tough chicks unite: Michelle Rodriguez (left), the brooding boxer of *Girlfight*, stars with Jovovich (right), who played Joan of Arc

(continued from page 7) games. You'll see the architecture and you'll be amazed at the accuracy. Even the front of the train is labeled 'Alex 5000,' straight from the train in RE2."

The relationship between Capcom and Impact Films is significant, and the script was taken to Japan for approval where several changes were made. Though Capcom's upcoming game, Resident Evil: Zero, was well in development before Anderson's film, there will be loose connections between the videogame and the movie. In the future, however, Anderson would like to develop a sequel that more accurately shadows Capcom's next Resident Evil

game. The director hopes that such a bond could become a powerful filmmaking model, encouraging authentic adaptations.

Kutzer insists the film will follow the slow build-up of tension in the first game, and not RE2's shock-horror action. "Ultimately, our characters end up trapped half a mile underground," he says. "They have one gun, a spare magazine, and 526 zombies, so there's no way they can blast their way out. They have to be smart."

With lunch over, cast and crew scramble back into the dark, concrete tunnel — as it happens, the subway set. Beyond the mess of wires, cameras, and arc lights, silver crates and boxes line the

platform, while fluorescent loading bay signs, complete with Umbrella logos, hang from the ceiling. Filming is already underway, and a black train emerges from the tunnel and drags up to the station. The STARS team cautiously slides back the cargo door and files out, training their automatic weapons on unseen assailants — with the exception of the last two, who carry a mysterious wooden crate between them. Then Alice appears, wearing a long, narrow red dress. It's cold and dark down here. A multitude of lurking horrors can be imagined, and she looks suitably terrified.

It's only a snapshot of what the film might deliver,

but the level of detail is promising. Still, Anderson is unhappy with the take. The train is hauled back to its start location, the lights are dimmed, and "Action" is called again. Anderson's perfectionism is evident through take after take, and the routine of action and inaction continues. Michelle Rodriguez (*Girlfight*), who plays STARS member Rain, becomes impatient. Jovovich does a grubby bathroom to keep out the cold. Other STARS members take smoke breaks next to metal drums the script says are full of biological waste.

**Jovovich, however,** is used to the grueling schedule, nonchalantly discussing

(continued from page 7) even her own videogame persona.

Her mission here is to foil the scheme of a secret society bent on harnessing the powers of a mysterious clock, a quest that takes her from England to the jungles of Cambodia and the frosty caverns of Iceland. Yet there's never any doubt that Croft will prevail. She is unfappable, seemingly invulnerable, and never wrong. No risk = no tension = no drama: the quintessential formula for a bad script.

There are some nice moments, like Lara performing a graceful bungee bather in her living room, and many of the elements that made Lara Croft a popular videogame character find their way into the film. But that's not nearly enough to make her real.

— Steve Appleford

some of the more punishing scenes. "It gets harder and harder," she remarks. "From a videogame perspective the first few weeks were like the easy level, and then it got a little harder until two weeks ago we were in the flooded lab. It was freezing and I was wearing this little dress — and it's half ripped-off and soaking wet."

She sees the scene as a pivotal one. "In the lab we are looking for the anti-virus. One of the members of the team gets his memory back and betrays us. He escapes the lab and locks us in, but there are creatures outside trying to get in. The lab was hard. I had to drink myself 30 times a day to match continuity. But for audiences this thing is going to be amazing, because you have this really strong girl dripping wet in a little dress fighting for her life."

In the cold depths of a subway station it's difficult to assess the movie's potential, as so much of the tension will depend on post-production — editing, music, etc. Undead dogs and a nine-foot mutant attacking the train still have to be added, and the movie will survive or fail on success of its horror elements. "We're making a zombie movie for the 21st century, and it's not going to be a Romero flick," Anderson explains. "Though they are classics, if you look at those movies now they're very dated because of the zombie makeup and the way they're shot. Eventually you see too much of the



zombies and they become laughable. That's not the case in the games. The games are scary, and the zombies are very scary throughout. The look of the zombies is something we're really concerned about. We're using a lot of computer-generated images and animatronics — the whole range of visual effects as well as makeup."

**Criticism on the Internet**, culminating in a petition to have the film canned, has failed to dampen the spirits of the production team. Indeed, Anderson finds such loyalty misplaced. "The acting in the first *Resident Evil* was really bad. When Capcom does a new game they don't go, 'Right we're going to redo *Resident Evil*.' I speak as a gamer: if all I'm seeing from the movie is the first game, with all the bad dialogue transposed onto film, that's not a very good film. Why would I want to

pay nine bucks to see that?"

The film was first optioned soon after Capcom's original game hit the shelves, and both Geoffrey Wright (*Cherry Fols*) and George Romero himself made bids, but their scripts were rejected. Anderson's *Mortal Kombat* is the only videogame movie to make money domestically and even hit at critical acceptance, and Capcom's input and continued support also augur well. The rigid adherence to RE plot elements makes a welcome change from previously attempted game adaptations.

Jovovich is optimistic about the film's potential. *Lara Croft's* film has bigger backing, but, "Any real fan will tell you that *Tomb Raider* is bumblegum," she says. "*Resident Evil* is horrible stuff. Awful, violent, bloody. It's great! I just hope Paul doesn't fuck it up in post-production."

**Next Gen** hopes her passion is rewarded. *Resident Evil* will crawl out of the sewers and into theaters next summer. — Nigel Edge

#### ■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

## News Bytes

→ **E3 is behind us now (long behind us by the time you read this) and the industry is already gearing up for the holiday season.** Movies have their summer blockbusters, games have their Christmas champions, and this year the battle is on between Nintendo and Xbox — or is it?

**Perhaps he just likes teasing people, or maybe he's serious, but Nintendo Chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi keeps threatening to pull GameCube if American fans aren't excited enough about it.** Prior to E3 he told reporters that plans would be scrapped if GameCube's reception at the big show was too low-key. After the show, the understated chairman confirmed that the reception was good enough, "So naturally we'll go ahead with sales as planned." One is reminded of Peter Pan exhorting crowd of kids to clap really hard to save Tinkerbell's life — though in this case it seems more as though Peter has a gun to his fairy companion's head and is demanding kids clap hard or the Tink gets it.

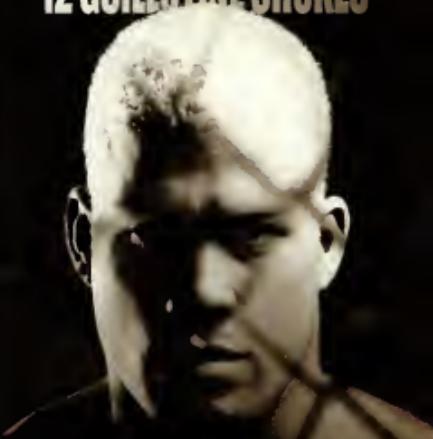
**For its part, Microsoft has geared up for the holidays with... P-O-R-N!** Okay, not really. Like PlayStation 2, Xbox's capability to play DVD movies leaves it open for pornography, whether the hardware manufacturer wants it or not. An enterprising company of fifth purveyors, Paxis Interactive, has already announced its first title for the XBOX (or as they call it, the SEXbox), *Virtuo Pornstar*: *Bunny Lux*.

**The topic of exploiting women for financial gain leads us nicely to industry music-man Tommy Tallarico (who's known for gallivanting around the halls of E3 with hired models on each arm).** And Tommy's work leads us to Shiny Entertainment, which is owned by Interplay. And Interplay is owned by well, we're not sure. The ailing game publisher received a healthy injection of French francs back in 1999 from Titus Interactive, but over the past two years the corporate marriage has not been a happy one. In April of this year Titus Chairman Herve Caen, Interplay Chairman Brian Fargo, and their respective companies called it quits, terminating their 1999 shareholder's agreement and giving Caen access to his full 25.62576 shares of Interplay. In May, Interplay announced that it is in sales negotiations with an unannounced company. Many in the industry suspect Pacific Century Cyberworks (PCCW), a Hong Kong communications giant, but inside sources tell **Next Gen** that the real buyer is PCCW's Japanese arm, Pacific Century Cyberworks Japan. PCCW already owns online game developer VR-I, bought small-fry publisher Jaleco, and made an offer to Activision earlier this year. — **NextGen**

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# GameCube Watch

08/01

## Mario lost and found, and more GameCube games you didn't see at E3

→ Nintendo's E3 2001 GameCube lineup was impressive, but not plentiful. With 22 titles on display and only half of them playable, Nintendo simply could not compete with the quantity of titles for PS2 or even Xbox. But that didn't stop it from holding back its biggest guns for Spaceworld.

### It's-A-Me, Mario!

Luigi's Mansion was fine, but what happened to *Mario*? Nintendo has never launched a system without him, and many were mystified that he wouldn't be there when GameCube debuts. The good news, at least, is that a *Mario* title totally separate from Luigi's Mansion is in develop-

ment. When can we see it in action? According to Shigeru Miyamoto, "When I said that *Mario* needed to grow up, what I really meant was that *Mario*'s design needs to change, as I'm afraid he was appealing a little too much to a younger age." (He clarifies an old Miyamoto quote that has long puzzled gamers.) "I would like him to appeal to a very wide range of ages. So I'm excited to hopefully show you something this summer [at Spaceworld]."

### Link Returns

Zelda was also missing from E3. A demo of Ganondorf and Link battling in a castle arena was first shown at Spaceworld 2000 and again (briefly) at the show.

When asked when we would finally see more, Miyamoto said, "Please wait until Spaceworld. Then we will show you something."

### Getting Retro

Texas-based Retro Studios came to E3 with a video of *Metroid* series

heroine Samus Aran kicking alien ass, along with a similar tape of its top-secret RPG. The FMV of *Metroid Prime*, as the game has been officially dubbed, used in-game models and textures, but was clearly pre-rendered. *Raven Blade*, an RPG set in an ancient world filled with beastly creatures, giant birds, and sword-wielding heroes, was also FMV. The artwork in both games looked amazing, but until we can see and play them, it's hard to

know what to expect.

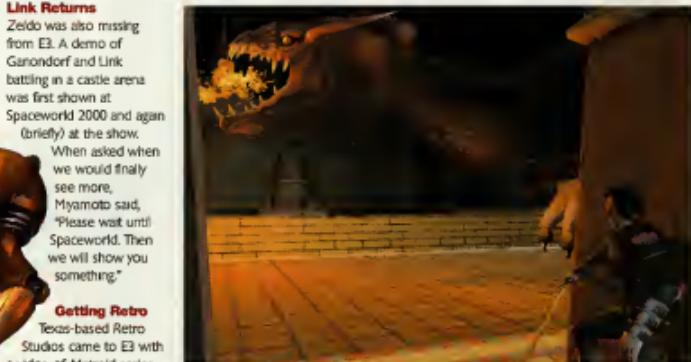
It's possible both titles may finally be in playable form at Spaceworld. Nintendo's Director and General Manager of Corporate Planning, Satoru Iwata, explains: "Spaceworld used to be for Japan, whereas E3 was mainly for the U.S. Starting last year with the GameCube announcement at Spaceworld, though, that show really became a point for announcing our plans to the world. And this time at E3 we've kind of done the same thing. It's been a worldwide announcement with news for all markets. We think that you'll see



■ Our monthly GameCube Watch columnist, Matt Casamassina, is also the editor of IGNcube.com

more of that at Spaceworld, with announcements for the U.S. and Europe as well as Japan."

Spaceworld 2001 is clearly going to be huge for GameCube fanatics, and we'll be there. **NextGen**



■ Quick video teasers of *Metroid* and *Raven Blade* were shown at E3, but they should be playable at Spaceworld this August

■ ROAD TRIP!

# One Hardcore Summer

Screw the beach. Mark these cult-gaming events on your calendar

→ Sure it's a terrific time to relax and work on your tan, but summer is one cold season for game releases. That doesn't mean you can't get your fix. Our friends at QuakeCon, California Extreme, and the Classic Gaming Expo are hosting gaming events that will surely make this a summer to remember.

## QUAKECON 2001 (AUGUST 9-12)

Id plans to gather 3,000 of your closest Quake-playing friends for a 24-hour fragfest. Where? At QuakeCon 2001, held Aug. 9-12. An annual event in Mesquite, TX, QuakeCon will feature the \$50,000 Nvidia Championship Quake II Arenas competition, where 512 players will face off with rocket launchers blazing.

What started as a 50-member LAN party in 1996 has evolved into a Quake-community phenomenon, where gamers converge to show their skills in tournament play or enjoy some "friendly" competition in the 1,250-person bring-your-own-computer LAN games. And yes, admission/participation is free; so head to: [www.quakecon.org](http://www.quakecon.org).



■ Bring your own computer to compete in the massive LAN party

## CLASSIC GAMING EXPO (AUGUST 11-12)

Looking for something a little more old-school than Quake? Then take the weekend of Aug. 11-12 to check out the **Classic Gaming Expo** in Las

Vegas, NV. Born out the World of Atari show in 1998, the fourth annual CGE will once again be held at Jackie Gaughan's Plaza Hotel and Casino. This year, CGE will feature its usual top-notch collection of classic consoles and games, speakers, and a swap session, as well as a limited number of the never-released *Combat Two* for Atari 2600 on sale! Fans of classic systems, this is your chance to rub elbows with industry legends such as Magnavox Odyssey

inventor Ralph Baer. For more information, go to: [www.cgexpo.com](http://www.cgexpo.com)

■ Add *Combat Two* to your Atari 2600 collection

inventor Ralph Baer. For more information, go to: [www.cgexpo.com](http://www.cgexpo.com)

## RETRO COIN-OP CONVENTION (SEPTEMBER 15-16)

If you yearn to flip back the calendar to a time when your local arcade had the best games, book your flight now to San Jose, CA for the annual **California Extreme** classic

arcade and pinball show. Held at the San Jose Convention Center from Sept. 15-16, California

Extreme features a broad range of arcade machines including Venture, Robotron, and Bottleneck. This year's show will feature a charity raffle for a Hercules pinball machine, which holds the Guinness record for the largest pinball machine in the world. Also on hand will be the incredibly rare Super Centipede/Missile

Commander II machine — one of only three units known to exist. For more, check out: [www.caextreme.com](http://www.caextreme.com)



■ Bring to friends that you've played *Missile Command II*

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### harman/kardon SoundSticks

MSRP: \$199.99  
Manufacturer: harman/kardon

→ If this were a beauty contest, harman/kardon's ultra-stylish SoundSticks would take First, Second, and Third Prizes. With its elegant lines and clear acrylic casings, this 2.1 set makes the cheesy futuristic design of Apple's iMac's look positively dated. They represent well sonically, too, with plenty of power and clear performance for both gaming and music. However, they're not cheap, as the \$199 MSRP makes clear (no pun intended), and this is strictly a 2.1 set — no surround sound. The speakers were designed for the Mac user, but the connector is USB, and there is at least limited PC support (more than one PC demo at E3 relied upon them to bring the noise).

Rating: ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Hands-down the coolest-looking speakers in the universe. However, they're only 2.1, and support for non-Mac platforms is limited.



### Midland S4 7100 Plus

MSRP: \$299 (without optical cable)  
Manufacturer: Midland

→ Midland's 8200 speakers (MSRP \$399) were the finest in our last speaker round-up (NG 12/00), and this slightly scaled-back offering is cut from the same high-quality cloth. The remote is more solidly constructed this time around, and the surround sound decoder — one of the few with a PS2 friendly optical cable connector — has been improved. As a tradeoff, the satellite speakers themselves have smaller drivers (2.5 instead of 3.5 inches); the subwoofer is slightly underwhelming and the unit's overall power has decreased. As with its predecessor, the performance of the 7100 Plus across all sound ranges and inputs (music, games, and DVDs) is both full and, more importantly, distortion-free, with crisp highs, smooth midranges, and solid-yet-punchy bass sounds. And of course, this is a full 5.1 surround sound system. Best of all, we've seen them on sale as cheaply as \$199.

Rating: ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A quality set of speakers, perfect for those who can't afford the more expensive 8200s.



### ■ A POUNDING FOR A PENNY

## Labtec Pulse-424

MSRP: \$49.99

→ Let's face it: Some gamers don't care about surround sound. For them, a 2.1 system is plenty. And while Klipsch's \$199 ProMedia 2.1 set is almost universally considered the crème de la crème, we could get by nearly as well with Labtec's Pulse-424s. The connectors are decidedly PG centered, forcing PS2 players to hunt down an adapter. But with a dirt-cheap MSRP of \$49.99, these speakers provide incredible bang for the buck, and that's only the cost of a single game.



■ IT'S LIKE A PARTY IN YOUR EARS

## Paradigm Cinema HT System

MSRP: \$716.80 (without surround sound decoder)

→ Paradigm might like us to think that its 5.1 sound system is in the same league as the other systems we review, but the pricing and the system's awesome performance suggest otherwise. If you don't mind dropping the cash, we can honestly say that these

speakers offer performance above and beyond everything else in this round-up. It's not just a matter of power either; these speakers offer unmatched clarity and a very full and rich sound that is ripe with subtlety. Unfortunately, they don't come with a receiver, so you'll have to shell out for one of those too (just be sure it's 5.1-compatible). If you're a serious audiophile who isn't just dabbling with the novelty of a PS2 DVD player, you should consider these speakers as a permanent audio solution for your living room.



## Logitech Soundman Xtrusio DSR-100

MSRP: \$179.99

Manufacturer: Logitech

→ Logitech's entry into the 4.1 speaker market provides great sound, considering the slightly-lower-than-average price. Unfortunately, the cords are permanently mounted into the speakers, so if one cord goes bad, you'll need a whole new speaker. The "remote" is actually attached to the subwoofer by a cord but nonetheless enables the listener to adjust power, volume, and fader without crawling under the desk. Overall, sound quality is excellent, though it distorts at higher volumes and isn't as full as that of the Midland systems. The DSR-100 is also strictly designed for PC users, and console owners will need to purchase adapters just to connect the set to their system. Also, this is a 4.1 system, not 5.1, so your DVD playback may suffer accordingly.

**Rating:** ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** You get plenty for your money, but for just a little more green, you'll get better sound and a lot more versatility.

## InterAct Sound Stage 5.1

MSRP: \$149.99

Manufacturer: InterAct

→ With the PS2 ringing in at \$299, some folks have a hard time justifying spending that amount or more on a set of speakers. InterAct has heard their cries and answered with this budget-minded set of true 5.1 speakers. But it's plain some corners have been cut. While there's nothing particularly wrong with these speakers, their sound quality is simply inferior to similar, higher-end systems like the Midlands or Creative's DTT 3500 (reviewed in **NG** I2/00), with greater distortion, more harshness, and subtler ambient sounds often dropping out almost entirely. There's plenty of volume and three selectable inputs, which are great for the multi-system user. However, there's no optical input at all, and InterAct also commits the peculiarly common cardinal sin of permanently attaching the speakers to their conveniently long but vermicelli-thin cords.

**Rating:** ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** A reasonable compromise, but a compromise nonetheless. If you're going to buy extra speakers, do yourself a favor and go all the way.



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# The X-philes

08/01

**When Microsoft gambles in games, Microsoft's money makes all the difference. Or does it?**

→ A few months ago, I sat in a casino for a no-limit Texas Hold 'Em game and tried to make some money. The only opponent who worried me was some overweight yutz in an Adidas jogging suit with a pile of chips the size of my head. He wasn't a good player — he'd play out the worst junk hands — but within an hour he'd priced me right out of the game and I left busted.

There's something both admirable and frustrating in watching high rollers run the table; you hate their arrogance but admire their resources. Could Microsoft be trying to run the table in the next round of the console wars? Xbox isn't simply a better piece of hardware than anything else out there; it is years better than PS2 and GameCube.

#### Harder-Ware

In Xbox, Microsoft has made a broadband, high-definition, 5.1 surround-sound box for a narrow-band, low-res, stereo world. Most Internet connections in the U.S. are still 56k or less; few people can afford an HDTV; and not a single developer we've spoken to has used all 256 voice channels in Xbox's amazing multimedia chip. It's an ideal anchor for a home theatre system, for say, 2004.

With a price tag of \$299, most industry pundits guess Microsoft is losing at least \$125 per unit. (Nintendo's Peter Main thinks it's a lot more — see page 70.) And even if all 800,000 U.S. Xboxes are sold this holiday season, that's a \$100-million loss. Combine that with



■ Spielberg's summer flick had better be good — for the sake of Xbox

\$500 million for marketing, extensive R&D, manufacturing, the purchase of Bungie and others, and you're talking billions. Microsoft has already warned shareholders that it is going to take a beating in the market for a couple of years, but keep in mind that it's spending money like a faucet not for the \$6 billion videogame industry of 2004, but for the \$13 to 15 billion market of 2006. Even if it only grabs a third of that pie, the initial investment will be worth it.

#### Aces in the Hole?

That sort of economic hubris would be lethal if it weren't for the fact that top minds really do dig Xbox. "It's an amazing piece of hardware," John Carmack recently told **Next Gen**. Director Steven Spielberg is also quite taken with the machine, and short video teasers of games based on his film *A.I.* were shown at E3. Now, southern-Cal

developer Vision Scape Interactive is working on *AI Chaser*, a mission-based flying game (think *Smuggler's Run* in a helicopter) set in and around a futuristic city.

And, in a brief, post-E3 flap, Bidos let it slip that *Theft* and *Deus Ex 2* would appear on Xbox first, then on PC and other platforms. Warren Spector

was quick to deny the story, but it makes sense to develop on Xbox. With its familiar architecture and tools, working within the limitation of fixed RAM first makes it all the easier when it comes time to move to PCs' varied yet flexible structure.

#### Big Bettors Bet Big

Still, traditional console



■ X-philes columnist Jim Preston is a regular contributor to **Next Generation**

developers have been reluctant to fully embrace the platform. As game budgets continue to escalate, though, multi-platform development is the only realistic formula for most game makers, and the ease of developing for Xbox cannot be ignored.

The only problem with this scenario is that, for all Microsoft's billions, Sony and Nintendo can't be priced out of the poker game the way I was out of mine. But Microsoft may genuinely believe that the pot is big enough to justify dismal E3, little Japanese support, and few killer titles — at least for this round. And Microsoft, after all, is a company with an awful lot of chips.

NextGen



■ Developer Vision Scape ([www.vision-scape.com](http://www.vision-scape.com)) started as a CG cinematic house

# In the Studio

Development news as it develops

## MORON LINE. AHEM. THAT'S MORE ONLINE FROM SONY AND SEGA

→ Sony has finally released a picture of the hard drive and modem that will fit in that empty slot in the back of your PS2, while in other online news, Sega of Japan announced plans to launch a cross-platform online game called *Gun-Gearra: Desen 2*. Players can connect to the game via the PlayStation 2, Dreamcast, and will also see the game coming to the U.S., though a statement from Sega of America reiterated the company's commitment to online console gaming and indicated that it will make further announcements at a later date.



## LINUX-BASED PLAYSTATION COMPUTERS?

→ Maybe the old PSX isn't as dead as we thought. Czech-based tech company Blokman Trading has ported the Linux 2.4 kernel to PlayStation. For what purpose, you ask? Well, according to a post on Blokman's homepage by CEO Vadim V. Vesichchev, "to transform PlayStation and PlayStation 2 game consoles into low-priced desktop computers." Blokman intends to complement the PlayStation keyboard and mouse with a hard disk and printer. A beta version of the software, called Runix, will be available in July. It can be downloaded free of charge from [www.blokml.com](http://www.blokml.com).

## CRUCHING DEVELOPER, HIDDEN FRANCHISE

→ Ubi Soft has picked up the rights to publish Battle Realms. This samurai warrior strategy game created by Liquid Studios (see Milestones, page 54) was featured in this column last month as the subject of a squabble in an EA-Crave co-publishing deal. But Ubi Soft's taste for Asian themes hasn't stopped them; the company has acquired the rights to publish a game based on Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.



## THE FIRST EX-XBOX EXECUTIVE

In keeping with Sony's and → Sega's console launch tradition, an executive involved in the initial planning of Xbox has ridden the bus off the Microsoft campus. Director of Xbox Third-Party Kevin Bachus, one of the system's "founding four" and the man behind the original Xbox, White Badass' boss, J Allard, refused to comment on the reason for his departure. Bachus told *Next Gen* it was his personal decision to leave the company — although we've also heard rumors to the contrary. Regardless, Next Generation wishes Bachus the best of luck and祝愿他去他的新公司能够取得成功. As for the growing Microsoft trend — you see, he occasionally gives us real information.

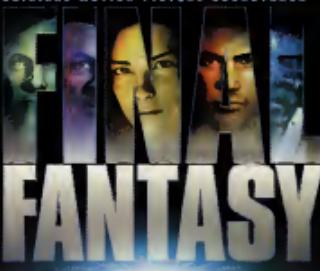


## BERNIE ON THE MOVE

→ Industry mover and shaker Bernie Stolar is moving and shaking once again. The former Sony-then-Sega-then-Mattel executive told us himself that he has something new planned for the game publishing community, although it's under wraps for the time being. When we know more, you will too.



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# → Alphas

Next Generation braves the stormy seas of game development to bring you these exclusive previews

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■ XBOX

# BLOOD WAKE

■ Publisher Microsoft ■ Developer Stormfront Studios ■ Release Date November 8 (Xbox Launch) ■ Cogni US

Like SSX for PS2, could *Blood Wake* be the surprise hit of the Xbox launch?

→ Throw away the age-old litmus strip that is the polygon count; the new test for the next-gen consoles is water. Creating realistic water is simply impossible to do on 32-bit systems, and new games such as *Wave Race* on GameCube and *Metal Gear Solid* on PS2 do a more-than-respectable job, but the best

water may be in *Blood Wake* on Xbox. The flow, wake, reflections, and splashing are simply beyond anything attempted in a game before.

But *Blood Wake* is much more than a tech demo. It is a screaming, burning, jumping, raining, and thundering vehicle-combat game set on high and deadly seas. Imagine a

fictional South China Sea torn between three warring factions. The ancient, merchant-led Jade Kingdom is at war with the industrial Iron Dragon Empire, while the Shadow Clan — opportunistic islanders who are simply looking to survive — is caught in the middle.

As a member of the Shadow Clan,

# → Alphas



■ In addition to the standard Story mode, there will be special battle arenas just for smiting thy enemies

you must navigate waters, both real and political, through more than two dozen missions across six acts. You'll have 18 different boats at your disposal (although some will have to be earned as you progress through the story), and your busy trigger finger will fire rockets, cannons, chain-guns, torpedoes, mines, and even some "mystery" weapons. One of those is a "crazy weapon that hasn't been seen before," says Stormfront Studio's co-founder David Bennett, "but it's a special weapon based on the unique power of our water physics. I can't say more than that right now..."

■ The 18 playable boats each have several different armament configurations. Of course, some will have to be unlocked before they can be used

But what Bennett will say is that playing Blood Wake is never the same experience twice. "Because our AI is so fluid and responsive, a lot depends on exactly how you play the mission. Even a slight difference in timing can really change the way a given battle feels and plays out." And with three difficulty levels, a Battle mode for two- or four-player combat, and probably an instant-action option for

**"Even a slight difference in timing can change the way a battle feels and plays out."**

— David Bennett, co-founder, Stormfront Studios

the impatient, Bennett is betting that if the story doesn't sweep you up, the constantly fresh action will.

Sound too good to be true? We must admit we're a little skeptical. No one has mastered water-based vehicular combat, and traditionally, the third-person perspective often makes it difficult to drive and fire. Blood





Woke solves the problem with auto-targeting that will not only lock onto your enemies, but will also give you some idea of their health and condition as well. It's not perfect yet, and Burnett says that the team has made it the focus of its play-balancing tasks.

Considering the visual feast Stormfront sets with Blood Wake, players may be too distracted to

shoot. We piloted our craft through a choppy sea under a dark sky with lightning flashes, realtime shadows, and individual raindrops that produce unique ripples on the water. The audio complements the experience with rich, layered sound effects, fully positional 3D audio, and a dynamic soundtrack that rises to meet the action. With loads of explosions and



■ There's no final word on whether *Blood Wake* will support HDTV resolution, but with these kinds of explosions we can only hope

## The wake and reflections are simply beyond anything attempted in a game before.

boats jumping off reefs, the game reaches new levels of mayhem. This could be the killer, sleeper title that just may make Xbox your next box.

— Jim Preston



■ Don't let the realistic graphics fool you. There will be plenty of fantastic weapons, including our favorite — death from above.

### INVEST IN SPEAKER COMPANIES

Most people already know about Xbox's amazing graphical abilities — just look at these screenshots. But few appreciate that Xbox has a 5.1 Dolby Digital Encoder, 64 voices of true 3D audio built into the hardware, another whopping 192 voices for the developer, and a proprietary synthesizer that shares those voices with the rest of the audio system. It'll take a quality home theater system to appreciate it, so just do what we do: Hack a kidney on eBay, or take a look at some of the other speaker systems found on page 12.

■ PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

# DARK SUMMIT

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Radical Entertainment ■ Release Date: Fall ■ Origin: Canada

Not just snowboarding — a snowboarding adventure

**E** Let's face it: Despite the fact that snowboarding games have promised more extreme experiences and increased realism, Electronic Arts' SSX is the only snowboarding game that has taken the genre anywhere marginally different. Every other game in the increasingly bloated "extreme sports" category has either relied on a few tweaked maps or gone the hardcore sim

route, which inevitably leaves players feeling as if they're stranded on flat land, hopping around to gain a little bit of speed. With Dark Summit, Radical Entertainment has recognized that the category is getting increasingly stale, so the team didn't set out to just create a snowboarding game, but a snowboarding adventure.

Sure, in Dark Summit your character is

a snowboarder, and you can do tricks as you make your way down the slopes. But it's not all about riding rails and doing flips. The Radical Entertainment team has proudly integrated adventure game and story elements into Dark Summit's otherwise traditional snowboarding gameplay.

"This is fresh and new, and a wake-up call to everyone who thinks ultra-realism is fun," says Radical Entertainment Game Designer Justin Sheffield. "Go outside for ultra-realism. Stay inside to play our game."



MELON GRAB



■ Tricks like the "melon grab" earn you reputation points that will enable you to upgrade to better gear

■ The tricks are fun, but *Dark Summit* is really built around the storyline



*Dork Summit* takes place on Mt. Garrick, a ski resort that has gradually become more closed-off to boarders. While once limited to a handful of runs, snowboarders are now completely restricted from the summit and are being driven off the mountain by Chief O'Leary, the resident ranger.

The goal of the game is to uncover the secrets of the mountain and what O'Leary is hiding. As you speed down ski runs, you'll earn "reputation points" that will enable high-tech equipment upgrades. Tricks and "hailing" objects are two methods to accumulate reputation points. The big paydays, however, come when you complete missions, which include smashing signs, jumping helicopters, and escaping crazed forest rangers. If this conjures up images of a certain Mystery Machine-driving group of meddling kids, it's not just a coincidence:

"It's sort of a *Scooby-Doo* meets *The X-Files* meets *Apocalypse Now*-type of script," adds Sheffield.

Each run takes about 20 minutes to complete, with 40 challenges and six unlockable, playable characters waiting to be unlocked. Although many members of the Radical Entertainment team are avid snowboarders, they claim you don't need to be a snowboarder to enjoy the game; it's really an action-adventure game with a snowboarding layer wrapped around it. "Our mission," emphasizes Sheffield, "was to create a whole new gaming experience. We aren't crossing genres; we're expanding them."

**That's big talk** for a developer with a spotty track record of late. Radical will need to conquer its own Mt. Garrick and solve the mystery of how to make a snowboarding game enjoyable as well as

unique. If the developer can introduce the adventure aspects without sacrificing the snowboard gameplay, players may come away from the game with a sense of "mystery and intrigue," as Sheffield describes, "combined with speed, exhilaration, and just plain awe."

Can Radical deliver a new take on old slopes? We're hoping. — Kevin Toyamo



■ *Dark Summit* has an edgy feel to its environments and characters



## INSPIRATION FROM ALL AROUND US

Where did the Radical Entertainment team find its Inspiration for *Dork Summit*? Try one part cool, one part snowboarding culture, and a dash of pop culture. "You name it, it's in here," explains Radical's Sheffield. "*Apocalypse Now*, *Where the Wind Blows*, *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, the cover of Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*..."

Anyone who's hit the slopes on a non-snowboarder's get from non-boarders: As you cut down the mountain, the Ski Patrol will be sure to give you a hard time.



■ Helicopter blades are a means to earn reputation points, but they're definitely not your friend



■ Non-playable characters play an important role in *Dark Summit*. You'll have to escape from them if you hope to decipher the secrets of Mt. Garrick



■ The technology is already up and running, but there's still not much in the way of gameplay implemented

■ XBOX

## PROJECT EGO

■ Publisher Microsoft ■ Developer Big Blue Box ■ Release Date Fall 2002 ■ Origin UK

Throw away the scripts, the rails, and everything else you've ever seen in an RPG

Many game designers promise the moon and deliver paper-mâché moon rocks. Peter Molyneux is perhaps chief among those who can deliver on a crazy idea, and Project Ego, developed at a Lionhead Studios satellite company Big Blue Box, is perhaps his craziest.

If you've played a digital roleplaying game before, you've had the same dissatisfaction we've all had: it's not really "role" playing. How you play your character can influence your character and his surroundings only so much. In PE, the only set detail is at the beginning. You are a 15-year-old whose family and dog have been killed. You begin there your 70-year quest for retribution and greatness in which absolutely nothing is pre-ordained until your character dies of old age. The final act of the game is the opening of the history books where you read your character's story.

**This all takes place in** a lavish 3D world where you can do almost anything, and everything you do changes that.

world. Attack a young boy, give him a scar, and when you come back 20 years later, he has the scar and a grudge. Go find the dragon and make him an ally, kill him, or ignore him — it's entirely based on how you choose to play your character, but every decision will affect your overall path.

Ego is very early in development and,

at this stage, is actually more technology than game. The only reason we're giving it the time of day is because of its pedigree. Quite frankly if anyone can pull it off, it's Molyneux and his crew at Blue Box. We'll be keeping a close eye on this one over the next year (or two) before its release.

— Aaron John Loeb



■ Your decisions affect not only your appearance, but how the world around you reacts to your presence



### WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

If nothing in this game is defined, what's the point? To tell a great story. Your character is driven to do great (either good or bad) things. It is up to the player to determine what those things will be and how they'll get done. You can don black clothes and talk in whispers. Sneaking around and backstabbing people become second nature. Donning gorilla armor and hacking at people with swords will have different effects. In either case, our hero is on a quest to make sure that, when the book of legend is opened at the end of his life, he will be remembered and his story will be worth reading.



*A Journey of friendship*

*A Journey fraught with danger*

*A Journey to save the world...*

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*A Journey West*



# SAYUKI

## Journey West

Saiyuki is a strategy RPG based on one of the most popular legends of China, the journey of the monk Sanzo from China to India and back.

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- Character Customizing**  
Add special abilities and improve character attributes!
- Magic**  
Magic turns the tide of battle! Effects range from beneficial healing, to comets that kill all in their wake!





Compatibility between golfers is an issue. Well-matched pairs will enjoy each other's company, play better, and spend more money

■ PC

# SID MEIER'S SIMGOLF

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: Firaxis ■ Release Date: Fall ■ Origin: US

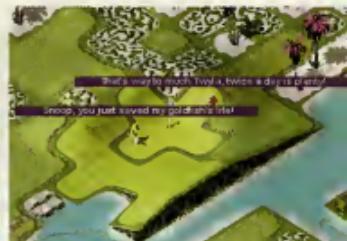
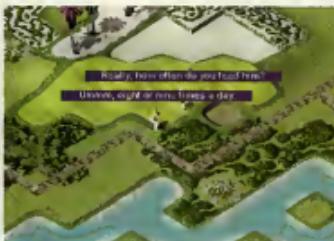
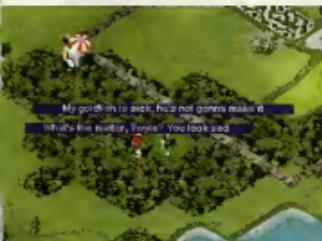
What happens when the father of Civilization II invites the founder of Sim City to hit the links?

→ If Sid Meier, the creator of Civilization II, had told us last January that he had shelved his eagerly awaited dinosaur-themed title in order to work on a golf game, we wouldn't have believed him. But this is no ordinary golf game: It's a golf game developed by

Meier with the input of "Sim-everything" über-designer Will Wright. To quote the Monty Python crew, "... And now for something completely different."

Fundamentally, Sid Meier's SimGolf is similar to Bullfrog's Sim Theme Park games. You design, build, and maintain

golf courses, choosing from four visual themes and literally hundreds of environmental elements — from benches, ball washers, and bushes, to an English castle. Your course is then patronized by sims, (yes, the same sims from Wright's million-selling game The Sims) whose



■ Proponents of chaos theory will love this game. Here, Twyla's goldfish narrowly avoids death through gluttony, thanks to a properly designed golf course



■ A great course may attract celebrities, giving your grounds that *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* appeal

golf scores (and thus, happiness) are actually dictated by your design. If the course is beautiful, and your holes are challenging, but manageable, they'll do well and spend more money. If the course is ugly or unkempt, and the sims can't sit down or find anything to drink, they'll shoot poorly and business will suffer. Luckily, your golfers' dialogue during play will offer direct feedback as to how you're doing.

Once your course is up and running, you can do some golfing yourself as the course's resident SGA (SimGolf Association) pro. To golf, you simply choose your shot (from a choice of

straight shot, low punch shot, low left fade, high shot with backspin, etc.), aim, and click to swing. Eventually, you can bring in money by holding, and perhaps even winning SGA tournaments. You must be careful though; like any sim, your pro's emotions weigh heavily on his/her performance. Good golfing builds better skills, but if you cuff an important shot, you'll need to take some easier, safer shots to rebuild your sim's confidence.

As the golfers in *SMSG* are actual sims, you can import golfers directly from your roster of characters in *The Sims*, and their clothes, attributes, and even dialogue can be customized to your heart's content. (In fact, we witnessed an absolutely hysterical round played by *Star Trek's* Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock.) And there's more: The sim's tell stories as they golf — stories that actually change depending on how well they're golfing.

For example, during our demo, a golfer named Charlie was lamenting that he didn't know how to handle advertising for his business. His partner, Ted, was shooting poorly and responded rather brutally, "You're really stupid, aren't you?" Then Ted hit a great shot on a gorgeous hole, and with renewed spirit, offered instead, "I know how to do all of that stuff. I'll help you out!" Just then, a few



■ You can adjust the appearance and characteristics of each golfer, or even import your sims from *The Sims*

holes down, a young couple decided to have a baby. This tales aren't just for entertainment either; as carrying stories through to a happy ending feeds your business. Naturally, you can also construct your own stories, so expect to see plenty of scenes from *Caddyshock* and *Happy Gilmore* re-created on the game's web site.

Typical of Meier's work, *SMSG* will reward any number of playing strategies. Says Meier, "our goal might be to make as much money as possible, or to make your golfers as happy as possible, or to create the world's most beautiful or courageous golf course, or to win the famed SGA Open tournament."

Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain) once said, "Golf is a good walk spoiled..." He never met Sid Meier — Eric Bratcher

## MAXIS + FIRAXIS

We asked Will Wright, master of all things Sims, just how he came to collaborate with Sid Meier. Here's what he had to say: "It's definitely Sid's baby. He came to us. He thought it felt more like a 'Sims' title so he approached us with the early prototypes. We then started a discussion on how he might add features to the game to make it fit the franchise more cleanly."

And on his prowess at golf? "I play very badly. My father was a very talented amateur golfer. The last time I played (six months ago) I did the whole nine holes with a four-iron (less stuff to carry). It didn't seem to impact my score at all."



■ If you choose the right shots and aim well, your pro's skills (Accurate Irons, Power Hitter, Recovery Shots, etc.) will improve



■ There are four visual themes to choose from: Woodlands (above), English Links (right), Southwestern Desert, and Tropical (opposite page, bottom)



# BRUTE FORCE

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**July 2001**

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TEST DRIVE PlayStation 2

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■ These tables aren't just for show. Knock them over and you can use them for cover.

## ■ PLAYSTATION 2

# DEAD TO RIGHTS

■ Publisher: Namco ■ Developer: Namco ■ Release Date: Spring 2002 ■ Origin: US

It's like a ballet with guns — lots and lots of guns

→ The revolutionary directorial techniques of Hong Kong cinema geniuses like John Woo and Ringo Lam have already had a profound impact on American cinema. The over-the-top gun-

fighting sequences in movies like *Hard-Boiled* have not only upped the ante in action filmmaking, they are also as much a forum for violence as they are for grace and style. Taking these themes and

techniques into the world of videogames was a no-brainer, but the question has always been, how? With *Dead to Rights*, Namco USA is presenting its answer to this question with a slick, no-holds-barred action game that doesn't break the rules of the traditional action game, but redefines them.

**Still, like any good** action flick, there's a solid story brewing below the surface. "In a nutshell it's really classic Hong Kong action à la the dramatic bloodshed films meets Hollywood noir of the '40s and '50s," claims Senior Producer Andre Emerson. "One interesting way to look at it is almost as if it were *The Maltese Falcon* clone by Chow Yun-Fat." The hero of this piece is a cop named Jack Slate who gets a "shots fired" call one fateful night while he's heading home. He arrives on the scene and is immediately embroiled in a fierce firefight that acts as the first level of the game. During the

■ Ammo is pretty sparse so the best way to re-arm is to grab an enemy's gun and turn it back on him





If you come up behind an enemy, you can use him as a human shield. When his usefulness has ended you can always take him out yourself

fracas, however, he stumbles upon the dead body of his father — an ex-cop himself — at the scene. With vengeance in mind, Jack ruthlessly tracks down the man he believes responsible for his father's death, only to find him similarly killed minutes before he arrives to do the job himself. State is framed for the murder, casting our hero's life into a downward spiral as he attempts to break through the web of deceit and manipulation that ensnares the city's underworld.

**The team is hoping** to re-create the

core of the Hong Kong action experience — the brilliantly choreographed gunfights — and in this respect, Divergent won't let anyone down. Jack isn't just another dumbed-down third-person action hero, he actually has a huge variety of moves at his disposal. You can run across a clearing, dive over a table (using the dive button), lock onto an enemy while you're in the air (using the lock-on button), and shoot him before you land. If you happen to knock over the table in the process, you can retreat behind it and use its upturned face for cover. Or, sneak up on

an enemy, and you can grab him around his neck with the action button and use him as a human shield as you wade into an oncoming hail of bullets. If your hostage survives the onslaught and there's no one left standing, you can always finish him off with a good clean shot to the head. And those are just the

**"The idea was to put as much of the cinematic control in the hands of the player as we could."**

— Andre Senneca, senior producer, Nanoleaf



The team has deliberately designed many of the levels so you can get through either by using stealth and guile, or by annihilating everything in your path. The choice is up to you



■ If you hold down the dive button the game will shift into slow motion. This not only looks cool, but it gives you a dramatic advantage.

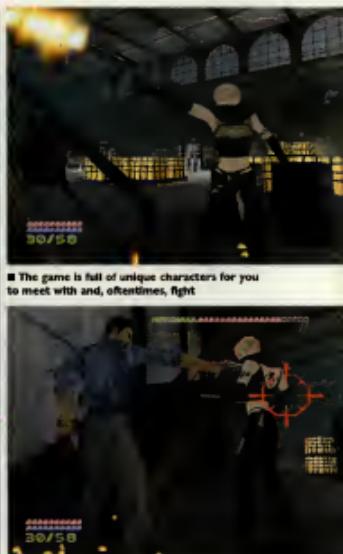
basics. There are plenty of subtle touches too. If Jack has two guns, for example, and the player hits the fire button at a regular pace, Jack will only use one of them. If the player hits the button faster, though, Jack will bring up the second weapon for additional firepower.

And things really get interesting when you start playing with analog properties of the action buttons. Press down harder on the dive button, for example, and the game will shift to slow motion, enabling

you to take out multiple targets before you hit the ground. Or — our favorite — hit and hold the disarming button while standing in front of a baddie and watch Jack grab the enemy's gun, spin it around, and use it to blow the bad guy's own head off. Still, the slo-mo moves are entirely optional. "The idea was to put as much of the cinematic control in the hands of the player as we could," explains Emerson. "As much as we like to believe that people want to see our

drawn-out sequence every time, there are going to be people who are playing by themselves who've seen all the different disarms and crazy special moves and just want to advance through the game."

**Yet the team is adamant** about making sure the game isn't a mindless action experience. Subsequently, the designers have focused on creating different gameplay experiences within each area. In the prison level, for example,



■ The game is full of unique characters for you to meet with and, oftentimes, fight.



02/12

■ The lock-on button always guarantees a shot to the chest, but if you want to tweak your aim a little you can do so with the right analog stick.

you're actually an inmate who has to find ways to earn cigarettes so that you can purchase information about an upcoming escape attempt. To get these cigarettes you can arm-wrestle or lift weights (both mini-games), or you can step into the boxing ring and wager your current earnings. Even the normally mundane act of getting through locked doors has been turned into a coordination-driven mini-game using a lockpick. "Too many games fall into the trap of just being 'collect the key cards to get you to more areas to collect more key cards,'" says Emerson. "We're trying to look at every section of the game and figure out what would be a realistic context for how a person would have to deal with each situation."

And, no matter what's happening

■ DTP doesn't pull any punches when it comes to violence. On the other hand, that's not the only focus of the game. "Like any good HK film, there's a deep story too."

onscreen, it all clips along at a very steady 60fps owing to a dedicated tools team that has been working on the engine since before the system came out. "The game engine is built from scratch," admits Emerson. "The programmers went over to Japan before kits were even available in the U.S. and they were peeking over the shoulders of the Tekken, Ridge Racer, and Moto GP teams just seeing how they were making the boxes tick. This gave us some important insight on how the hardware worked before the kits even showed up."

**With about a year** to go on the project, it's absolutely mind-blowing that the team has so much content to show. Still, there's a ways to go yet if they want

**"One interesting way to look at it is almost as if it were *The Maltese Falcon* done by Chow Yun-Fat."**

— Andre Emerson

to create an action game with a true soul of its own. Emerson elaborates his mission statement for DTP by way of closing: "We want to make sure the game's not just about shooting people. Even though there have been many many games carried by that alone, we truly want to create something that is more of an epic action adventure. Every couple of chapters in the story you're going to get a unique gameplay experience."

We can hardly wait. — Blake Fischer

#### TRAINING CAMP

Interestingly enough, many of the sub-activities in the game substitute for the lack of any sort of training level. "We're using the first few levels of the game to find proper context to teach the player how to play the game," says Senior Producer Andre Emerson. "So there's going to be very little price to pay in terms of breaking other things in the game, but we're using the game to teach the player the game in the context of the story. I didn't want to create a training mission. The goal is to build the training in the project itself." The boxing, for example, will teach players the basics of the hand-to-hand combat system, which will be necessary for parts of the game where you don't have any guns handy.

ENERGY



■ You can look around corners, *Metal Gear Solid*-style. Then, using the lock-on button, you can spin out into the hallway and take out any enemies that you've spotted lurking.



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■ Many of the original series' enemies are mirrored here, like this overgrown *Guardian of Forever*.

■ PLAYSTATION 2

# STAR TREK: SHATTERED UNIVERSE

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Starsphere Interactive** ■ Release Date: **Q3** ■ Origin: **US**

Interplay boldly goes into a quadrant held by *Star Wars Starfighter*

It's undeniable that the original Star Trek series with its macho, "What do you think that thing is? Hey, let's torpedo it!" attitude and swashbuckling, explombotional premise (not to mention Kirk's uncanny ability to arouse any female of any species) is incredibly compelling source material for a videogame. Interplay seeks to lock onto that appeal with its latest Trek title, a promising Star Wars Starfighter-esque space shooter. It looks great, controls well, and may have the greatest setting of any Star Trek game to date: the corrupt alternate universe first introduced in the classic episode "Mirror, Mirror" — complete with a wicked, scar-faced, evil Sulu. Trekies or

not, you're going to want to play this one.

**The thing that sets** *Shattered Universe* apart is the devotion developer Starsphere shows to the franchise. For example, the team wanted to use light-class fighters to interact with Trek's trademark massive capital ships, despite the fact that those same capital ships didn't actually carry squads of light fighters. But rather than throw series continuity out the window, a visionary plot was concocted to enable the action: After the events of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, Captain Hikaru Sulu's ship, the Excelsior, is trapped in the mirror universe and must fight its way out. Here,



■ The game runs at a solid 60fps, and each capital ship has more polygons than all the assets on a typical PSone game screen combined.

# → Alphas

■ All the missions take place in deep space environments, including nebulae, ion storms, asteroid fields, and ship graveyards

where the Federation is actually the evil Terran Empire, Starsphere Creative Director Andrew Iversen explains, "It seemed natural to assume that the ships of the evil mirror-Federation might well carry squadrons of deadly fighters."

**Not that mirror-Federation** ships are the only ones you'll pilot over the game's 30 missions. The four Federation fighters are complemented by three alien ships (one each of Vulcan, Klingon, and Romulan design). Each craft will have unique weaponry and flight attributes, and each will be upgradable. Players will also have the ability to boost shields, engines, weapons, or special abilities (craft-specific talents, like the Romulan ship's cloaking device) on the fly during battle, enabling them to further adapt to the situation.

And in these situations, players will encounter not only familiar faces (corrupt Sulu, possibly the evil incarnations of Chekov and Uhura?) but twisted mirror-versions of classic original series adversaries. These include the net-weaving Tholians, Commander Balok's gigantic, space-faring disco ball The Fesarius, and even that planet-eating mutant cornucopia, the Doomsday Machine (unfortunately, those green-skinned, Orlok slave girls are nowhere to be found). The action all takes place in the asteroid fields, nebulae, ship graveyards, and ion storms of deep space — again, in deference to the original series. Missions will be largely combat-based and range from protecting the Excelsior from an attack by aliens who believe it to be the "evil" version,

■ In what may be the only nod in history to the jaguar game Cybermorph, many ships will change shape slightly according to their velocity

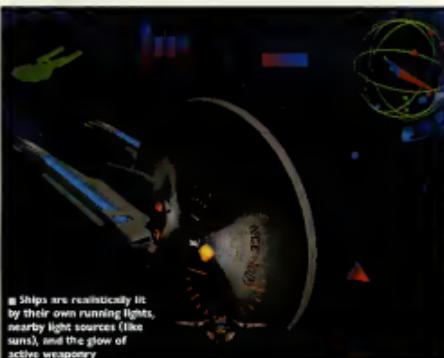


to teaming with the Romulans against a greater threat. Such allegiances must be chosen carefully, however, says Iversen: "Forming an alliance with the wrong side may well have devastating results later on in the game."

Whatever your allegiances, we feel pretty confident that this is one title you'll want to beam directly into your PlayStation 2 this fall. — Eric Brothier

## THEN VOYAGER, NOW ENTERPRISE

*Star Trek* is easily the most prolific science-fiction franchise ever, spawning some nine (soon to be 10) movies and four television series (five if you count the animated series — and six if you count *Enterprise*, the new series set to debut this fall). Despite being new, this series looks to be something of a return to the basics for the *Trek* franchise. It takes place some 55 years before the original *Trek*, when Earthlings are only just beginning to boldly go where no man has gone before. While little has been revealed, it is known that the Vulcans will be around, and *Quantum Leap's* Scott Bakula will take the helm of the *Enterprise*, as Captain Jonathan Archer.



■ Ships are realistically lit by their own running lights, nearby light sources (like suns), and the glow of active weaponry



■ Developer Starsphere was founded by the very same space-combat vets who ported *Wing Commander* to SNES

# A UNIT OF 40 FOOT KILLING MACHINES IS ONLY DWARFED BY THE MAN WHO COMMANDS IT.



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Microsoft



■ XBOX

## PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

■ Publisher Microsoft ■ Developer Bizarre Creations ■ Release Date Xbox Launch ■ Origin UK

Microsoft's fastest racer may catch Gran Turismo 3, but can it beat it?

→ In a few years gamers may be talking about Project Gotham Racing in the same hushed tones of reverence now reserved only for Gran Turismo. Think we're kidding? A lot of people didn't get a chance to experience the superb Metropolis Street Racer because it was released only for Dreamcast just months before the system keeled over. But UK developers Bizarre

Creations are taking their spectacular driving sim and improving it in every way — only for Xbox.

All the features that set MSR apart from any other racing game will be here. The three highly detailed reproductions of London, Tokyo, and San Francisco are joined by New York — complete with high-speed tours down Broadway, Wall Street, and through Central Park. The

game's day/night system will be synched to the Xbox internal clock, and improved weather effects mean more challenging driving later in the game.

"That said, don't assume that this is simply an Xbox version of MSR. It isn't," says Raja Subramoni, Microsoft's product manager for the game. "We are building on the innovation of a great game and adding elements of their new thinking and ideas into creating a truly unique racing experience."

Those new elements will include revamped scoring that uses the "Kudos" system. This brilliant point system has its roots in MSR, where it enabled gamers to tailor the experience to their skill level, never leaving them mired in the game's advanced mission structure. MSR's early Kudos system, however, wasn't as balanced as it could be. It was possible,



### A TRULY PERSONAL STEREO SYSTEM

Project Gotham Racing is actually going to improve on MSR's outstanding radio system. In addition to real radio stations, DJs, and licensed music this time, gamers will be able to rip their CDs to the Xbox's hard drive and cruise to whatever tunes they want. Rock on!



With realtime reflections and 16,000 polys per car, Gotham just looks amazing

Realtime headlights mean massive computational work for the GPU but gorgeous graphics for the gamer

for example, to race a hot-lap against a complete washout and gain massive Kudos, almost opening up an entire chapter after one race.

"That is one thing we've been really glad to get the chance to rework," says Bizarre Creations' founder Martyn Chudley, who has been intensely focused on getting the balance right. The new Kudos system will remove penalties for bad driving — you gain fewer Kudos rather than losing them — but will award more Kudos for new, stylish driving such as powersliding, long jumps, going on two

wheels through a corner, doing doughnuts, avoiding obstacles, and more.

**Aside from a retooled** scoring system, the game brings with it a completely new look. Bizarre Creations can now do things it only dreamed of. Car models will more than quadruple their polygon count to more than 16,000 each, and many little touches will be added to the game, such as litter, debris, dust, rain, puddles, more reflective surfaces, and realtime headlights that actually illuminate the world.

Yet our favorite addition is not only



A lot of the races are timed skill challenges, but you'll eventually face off against other racers

the selection of killer new cars (including the Ferrari 360, Porsche 911, and BMW Z3) but the ability to smash 'em up. "It's great," says Chudley, "as we can now take real cars into real cities — and get real buckled hoods and shattered buckles!"

Project Gotham Racing may become one of those rare titles that gains the ultimate respect of the hardcore. The great scoring system and wonderful atmosphere will make it accessible to casual gamers as well. It's precisely this sort of broad appeal that Xbox will need more of in the next year. — Jim Preston

# → Alphas

■ Worried that his public spokesman would be assassinated, this canny leader assigned bodyguards to his agent — one of whom took a sniper's bullet.



Link changed  
Link changed  
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PC

# REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

■ Publisher Eidos ■ Developer Elixir Studios ■ Release Date Q4 ■ Orig: UK

This revolution will be televised

→ We've seen simulations of everything from city building to relationships, but complex social environments have, thus far, eluded the world of computer gaming. Enter Republic: The

Revolution — the first game that promises to deliver the secrets, personal relationships, fist fights, political manipulations, bribery, graft, and rhetoric that make up the political process. We can't wait.

■ You don't always have to use bullets to shut someone up. This agent is about to bribe a priest to do a bit less rabble-rousing.

In Republic (first seen in these pages way back in **NG 01/00**), you play a small-town politico in a fictional breakaway Soviet republic called Novistrana. Playing the role of a jerkwater Lenin wannabe, you recruit followers to help you take over the country. Those followers recruit others, until you're the dominant head of a political hydra. The player's organization can take on many forms, be they religious, political, criminal, military, or business-oriented. You determine who in the cadre will be your lieutenants, and who will be your foot soldiers, and then you send them out to win over towns — each more important than the last — until, ultimately, your organization tries to dominate the capital city.

The game of Republic is, like the real-life game of politics, personal. Every member of your faction is a living, thinking character — and you are far from omniscient. A trusted lieutenant, for



■ Players can scale their view to high above the action, or zoom in close on an agent



instance, may have a secret loyalty to the head of a hated rival's faction. So while you seek out the weaknesses in rival organizations to exploit, other factions are doing the same; you never know who may betray you, or why.

**But for all its complexity** in concept, the actual gameplay should be easy enough to grasp. Republic takes place in a magnificently rendered 3D land where the camera can smoothly zoom from a dazed-eye view of the city down to the cigarette butt clutched by an aging soldier. The player assigns faction members to

perform one of the roughly 250 possible actions in the game. Think of these as technology advances in other games; early on, your thug can only kneecap someone; but later, he has a long list of abuses available. Many of the actions center on gathering information — about a rival faction in the town you're currently trying to dominate, or about other characters who might join the organization.

As faction members go out to do their duties — delivering a speech in the public square, for instance — you can follow them and watch how they do. Further, as your soldiers' actions play out, you can

make what Ebdz calls "a tweak." Sensing that the crowd is bored by the speech, you tell the agent to liven it up. The problem is that many of the agents are performing actions concurrently, so it's impossible to tweak all of their actions. Thus, your time and attention are best spent directing the game's most important resources, just like in real politics.

In the end, Republic is a strategy game that seeks to mine the depths and passions of the political process — and make it all about a trillion times more fun than watching C-SPAN. It's about time someone did. — Aaron John Loeb

## PINOCCHIO BEATS UP A PRIEST

Every character in Republic has a personality — even the common people on the street. We asked Pixar's Dennis Hassabis if he is ever, like Ghetetto, surprised by the actions of his AI creations:

"We were recently testing the code for a speaker giving a pro-government speech in a populated town square. It worked as we had intended several times, then one time a crowd member walked up to the speaker and started beating him up! We thought this was a bug, but it turned out that the simulation was working. That crowd member hated the government and had gotten angered by the speech — so angered that he turned violent."



**Early on, your thug can only kneecap someone. Later, he has a long list of abuses available.**

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# →Alphas



XBOX

## STAR WARS OBI-WAN

■ Rating: LucasArts ■ Developer: LucasArts ■ Release Date: December ■ Price: US

Midi-chlorians? No. Jar Jar? No. Lightsaber-swinging action? Yes.

It's no secret that many projects in the game industry don't come together exactly as planned. One of the more publicized snafus in recent history was the death of *Obi-Wan* as a PC game and its subsequent re-tooling for Xbox. So we approached the newer, more

console-friendly product with some trepidation — and while *Obi-Wan* may have started on PC, we were surprised by how different the game actually looked from its last incarnation. It's now completely an Xbox game, and more importantly, it looks and plays like a console game.

Naturally, the game's storyline intersects with the plot of Episode I. You won't, however, just be playing through the movie. Some aspects will be familiar, but you'll encounter a lot of new characters and locations that haven't been seen before. The main baddies, in fact, are a newly created race called the Jinni who are smuggling a Force-resistant material to the Trade Federation for use in their upcoming conflicts with the Jedi. You can still expect a few familiar faces, though. Periodically you'll have go in front of the Jedi Council to prove your skills against everything from common warriors to the council members themselves.

Despite the departure from the film's less-than-stunning story, *Obi-Wan* follows in some familiar footsteps. Players must fight and jump their way through gigantic 3D levels while solving puzzles and beating bosses. The Star Wars twist, however, sets the game along its own path. "The focus of the game is to make you feel like a Jedi Knight," offers Producer Mike Gallo. "How we do that with *Obi-Wan* is that he's got a lightsaber; he's got Force attacks and acrobatics, and all of those things are under your control. You can do all of the



■ Pull off a spectacular hit or an impressive combo attack, and the game will go into Matrix-style slow motion for dramatic effect.



■ The unique control scheme for the lightsaber gives the player unprecedented control when taking on enemies in the game.



cool stuff that a Jedi can do."

**Subsequently, Gallo explains,** it became the team's primary goal to make fighting with a lightsaber — whether against melee or ranged weapons — as involving and exciting as possible. "We have a pretty unique combat system with the lightsaber," he continues. "The right analog stick controls all of your lightsaber moves, so if you push left on the stick, he'll swing left; if you push

right, he'll swing right. If you swing left and then roll your thumb over to the right, you'll do a flurry as he comes back to that attack." Rounding out the control scheme are the left analog stick, which handles character movement, and a handy targeting button, which is available to keep the camera locked on potential prey while you circle-strafe around them. Finally, players will also have access to jumps, rolls, and even Force powers (including the popular Force push) by



■ Use your Force powers to suck the weapons out of your opponents' hands and leave them defenseless against your attacks

using the different buttons.

While the early build we saw still had a few framerate problems, the game looks to have finally come into its own. The developers used the same level models created for PC, but they have completely redone the character models and animation. One of the biggest changes is a dramatic shift in the color palette to brighter, more console-friendly colors. "You won't see any textures that were in the PC version," Gallo explains. "A lot of that is because the PC version was made to be photorealistic, and that doesn't sell as well on a TV; it sells better on a PC monitor."

In the end, Yoda's famous advice, "Do, or do not. There is no try," applies directly to the developers working on Obi-Wan. Their determination to do the game properly has led them down several paths, and appears that they have chosen the right one towards Obi-Wan's completion. When it's time to send this Padawan out into the world of Xbox gamers, the Force should finally be with him.

— Brooke Fischer



■ You can use your Force push not only to push opponents around, but also to throw many of the background objects into each other



# → Alphas



■ Test Drive sports an all-new physics engine, which allows for realistically modeled four-wheel suspension, among other things.

■ PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

## TEST DRIVE

■ Publisher Infogrames ■ Developer Pitbull Syndicate ■ Release Date Q4 ■ Origin UK

High speeds on real roads. What more do you need?

→ In today's videogame industry, every good idea is recycled so many times that gameplay atrophy becomes a given late in a system's life cycle. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the Test Drive series, which hasn't taken any real steps forward since Test Drive 4 and actually hit an all-time low with the last version, part six. Thankfully, the shift to PS2 and Xbox seems to have

rejuvenated the British codehounds at Pitbull Syndicate, and the newest Test Drive is revving to reclaim that glory the series knew so long ago.

At the core of this revival is a focus on

the values that made the series popular in the first place. "We still have licensed cars and real locations, but more importantly, it's still a street race," emphasizes Infogrames Producer Matthew Guzenda.



■ In many cases, you will be able to choose your own route through each city





Remember to use the left side of the road in London, or you'll make your life much harder than it needs to be.

"Our design philosophy has been to portray a Hollywood chase scene with real cars on real roads. Because of that, the racing may sometimes seem a little over the top, with larger-than-life jumps and crashes that the player can still drive away from as if nothing happened."

This rough-and-tumble feel works well with what has become a strong theme in the series: the battle between modern sports cars and souped-up '70s muscle cars. Guzenda was especially keen on the fact that the team has once again signed the GM license, which enables them to re-create the classic three-way struggle between the GM, Ford, and Dodge muscle cars that was missing from the last installment of the series. Overall, there will be between 20 and 25 licensed cars for players to choose from.

And while *Test Drive* doesn't strive for Gran Turismo's level of simulation, there is a hefty amount of realism blended with

the arcade-style feel, not unlike the combination found in *San Francisco Rush*. Each car's acceleration and top speed, for example, directly correlate to its real-life counterpart, so players will be able to feel the difference between driving a Dodge Viper and a '68 Mustang.

At this early stage in the development cycle, however, the cities you race in really steal the show. In our brief (ahem) test drive, we were actually able to recognize many familiar sites as we cruised through the streets of San Francisco (feeling appropriately like Karl Malden). The street map may not be 100% accurate — Guzenda admits that the team has cut out "the boring bits" — but the team has done an amazing job of nailing the feel of the city, and there are just enough landmarks around to give the scene credibility. For gameplay purposes, this mesh of city streets will be broken down into around 10 different tracks as well as a drag strip. Players will also get the chance to explore the streets of London, Tokyo, and Monaco.

The *Test Drive* series may have been slightly tarnished, and although this newest version shows that the name isn't beyond repair, final judgment will depend a lot on the car controls and intensity of the racing experience. As it stands, these two things are still being tuned. However, it looks like the team at Pitbull Syndicate finally "gets it," and could deliver the definitive *Test Drive* experience. — Blake Fischer



Instead of scenery that consists of one-dimensional, textured facades, the power of the new consoles has enabled the team to build complete 3D models of all the buildings along the roadside.



**"Our design philosophy has been to portray a Hollywood chase scene with real cars on real roads."**

— Matthew Guzenda, producer, Bigben



## THE LITTLE DIFFERENCES

Sure, the PS2 and Xbox versions of *Test Drive* are being developed simultaneously and will include the same gameplay features, but that doesn't mean they'll be exactly alike.

Intergames Producer Pitbull Guzenda explains:

"While the game code between the two versions is shared, the rendering engine of each version is completely independent. We've tried to add separate graphical enhancements based on the strengths of each platform. By doing separate rendering engines, we're not limited by either platform, so if one platform can do something better (or can do more) we've tried to take advantage of it."



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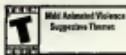
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■ ARCADE, PLAYSTATION 2

# VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: AM2 ■ Release Date: Summer (arcade), Q1 2002 (PS2) ■ Origin: Japan

## AM2 goes back to basics and takes fighting to new heights

→ In 1993, at the height of the fighting game craze, one title walked into arcades and upped the ante for everybody; it was Virtua Fighter, and gaming hasn't been the same since. With every new iteration, Virtua Fighter has defined the state of the art in 3D fighting. It has become one of the deepest, most highly detailed, most realistic, and most challenging series ever to appear on a monitor. To be a true master of Virtua Fighter requires an approach and dedication almost on par with studying a real martial art. Devotees can almost all tell you with pride about the first time they succeeded in pulling off a reversal, or when a stance change suddenly made all the difference.

It has, however, been almost three years since the last game in the series, Virtua Fighter 3tb, and over five years since the last true advance with VF3 and the Model 3 arcade board it ran on. In

the meantime, Namco's rival Tekken series and Soul Calibur, as well as upstarts like the DOA series from Tecmo, have wowed the gaming public while battling each other for the 3D fighting crown. So when news began leaking out of Sega's AM2 that Virtua Fighter 4 was in the works, it begged the question, did Yu Suzuki and his crew still have what it takes? Virtua Fighter 4 answers with a resounding "Damn right!"

To begin with, Sega's new arcade board, Naomi 2, appears to be a power house of polygon magic. Naomi 2 graphics simply look fantastic (comment overheard at E3: "Geez, my mom doesn't look that real"). Naomi 2 was reportedly built specifically to Suzuki's demanding standards and can handle 10 million polygons per second, even when fully textured (a reported 128MB of texture

data was used for the characters alone) and fully lit (Naomi 2 can use up to 10 simultaneous light sources).

Indeed, Naomi 2 makes short work of numerous realtime effects. In Jacky's



■ Note how the sand covering Jeffry's Island deforms in realtime — this also affects the character's movement and relative height

# → Alphas

■ VF4 uses a new, dynamic camera system, breaking free from the "seen only from one side" view common to fighting games



stage, a helicopter wielding a spotlight on the combatants throws accurate shadows as it constantly circles the construction site rooftop. A new clothing system has also been implemented, one that not only deforms correctly to the characters' bodies and movements, but also flows in response to environmental factors like wind. The realism is astounding.

**This realism is extended** to the characters themselves. All that time spent pushing the envelope and getting the characters exactly right in *Shenmue* is clearly paying dividends here. Characters constantly change expression in response to stimuli, and their face and body textures are so incredibly detailed, you

■ Details are everything — notice not only the de rigueur lens flare, but also the flock of cranes swooping through in the background. Beautiful!



can even read the lines on their palms. Add to that a much more dynamic camera system, and VF4 becomes akin to being in control of a martial arts movie.

Even better, it's become obvious that the graphics horsepower is not just window dressing — it is actually being used to affect gameplay in Jeffry's stage, for example, the sand is not just a large polygon with a sand texture laid over it (and a particle system to simulate grains flying off characters' feet). Instead, it's a complex surface, one that deforms as the combatants walk over it and impact against it — changing the lay of the land, so to speak, with their actions, and requiring subtle shifts in strategy as the landscape grows increasingly uneven.

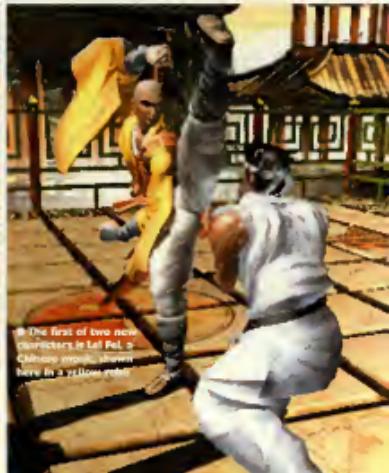
Likewise, Aoi's stage is covered in snow, which can be tracked through and pushed aside, changing the relative stickiness of the surface, and the ease with which a character takes a step.

## GIVE US YU

This past May at E3, Yu Suzuki took some time out to talk with Next Gen. A soft-spoken and gracious individual, when his translator was unable to effectively communicate a somewhat esoteric nuance of gameplay theory, Suzuki would actually shuffle his chair over and begin sketching diagrams to better illustrate the point.

On designing for different platforms: "I'm confident about PS2. Each hardware has different advantages, and according to the type of game I want to make, I can choose which platform I'll work on."

On why he wanted VF4 to be closer in design to VF2 than VF3: "Virtua Fighter 2 was a little more balanced. With VF3 I think we went for too much speed, too much complexity — the person who could put their moves in fastest usually won. I want VF4 to require more strategy, more awareness of the terrain and position."



■ The first of two new characters is Lal Pal, a Chinese monk, shown here in a yellow robe.



■ Why would anyone fight on top of a giant fish tank? Who knows, but it sure is pretty...

Even so, the stages themselves are deliberately simpler in layout than those in VF3, and you'll immediately notice the lack of stairs or other platforms. One new wrinkle is that some stages are surrounded by walls, which need to be broken through before an opponent can be tossed outside to score a ring out. For the most part, however, while the arenas are generally larger, they're also mostly square and relatively flat, in keeping with Suzuki's "back to basics" approach.

That approach extends to the game's control scheme, which returns to the classic three-button format of Punch,

Kick, and Guard (VF3's Escape button is gone). However, if the layout has been streamlined, the actual control has been improved, and the move list expanded again. The game now features a six-axis system for greater flexibility in 3D movement, and an entirely new parry system has been implemented on top of the counters that already exist — bringing up the mind-boggling possibility of parrying a counter, which could then be countered in turn. In addition, there's a new Charge Attack system, whereby holding down a button builds up the power of the resulting move.

■ Taking a cue from *Fighting Vipers*, some VF4 arenas have breakable walls you can smash an opponent through



■ Note the spotlight shining down (from a circling helicopter) — the Naomi 2 arcade board can handle 10 different light sources at once

## THE NEW KIDS

VF4 boasts two new characters, one male and one female. Lei Fei is a Chinese monk, who's entered VF4's tournament to pit his new style of martial arts against the others. He's been playful for some time, and his style appears remarkably fluid (see the animation sequence on the opposite page).

Although no gameplay has been shown of the new female character, Vanessa Lewis hails from Brazil and fights using Muay Thai kickboxing. She also marks something of a departure from Virtua Fighter's other women, who tend to be slender, quick and gymnastic. In contrast, as you can see, Vanessa is a big girl, with massive muscles and eye-catching white hair. It will be interesting to see what her abilities are.

VF4 also pushes forward with Sega's desire to build communities around its games. With VF4 comes the launch of VFNet, a network that links up cabinets in different arcades. For 500 yen (around \$4.00), you'll be able to purchase a "Data Card," a magnetic card that fits into a slot

# → Alphas



■ Forgive a puzzled aside here, but why is it that every new game in this series is promoted with screenshots of Pal beating up on her dad?

on the machine and stores your online moniker and ranking data. It also enables you to access your data and other information via the Internet or through cell phones and other portable devices, although the details of the system are somewhat sketchy at press time.

**Virtua Fighter 4** had its first open beta test at Ikebukuro's Giga Center in Tokyo back in May (see sidebar), and the crowds there were suitably impressed. The game will go into general release in Japan later this year, with a PlayStation 2 version to follow sometime in the first

half of 2002, where it will remain a console exclusive for a full year. Suzuki and Sega have implied that much of the graphic richness (especially in the textures) will have to be trimmed back somewhat for PS2, but they expect the gameplay to remain largely intact.

And so both in the arcades and at home, it's clear that the Virtua Fighter series is poised to make a triumphant return. Few other games can boast such dramatic strides between versions, such incredible attention to detail, or such a deep combat model. Tremble in awe at its approach.

—Jeff Lundrigan



## TESTING, TESTING

For four days in the middle of May, Sega put VF4 up for open beta testing at Ikebukuro's Giga Center in Tokyo. Virtua Fighter enthusiasts flocked there from all over Japan to be the first to sample AMD's latest fighter. Fans stood in line for hours to get a chance to play a single round of combat at one of the four cabinets on site, consisting of two pairs of linked machines, while a giant viewscreen had been set up for those still waiting. Beta versions of VF4's Electronic Data Cards were passed around, and cell phone viewing of VirtNet was on display.

All in all, it was a crowded, noisy four days, but the enthusiasm of the crowd was palpable, as was the fans' obvious plea at having a new Virtua Fighter to play with.



■ Virtua Fighter fans lined up for hours to worship at the shrine of Suzuki. You only had 30 seconds to have fun, but most everyone who tried it seemed to have a good time



■ Sega's Data Card system uses magnetic strip cards that slide into a slot on the cabinet (left) and record scores and rankings, which can be accessed via cell phone and portable devices (right)



■ Ah, few things can warm our hearts more than another chance to get the snot kicked out of us by Sarah Bryant



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Flight

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Speed

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Clever

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# →Milestones



■ You can cripple your enemy's productivity by destroying his resource structures, as these Dragon Clan sledgers are about to demonstrate.

■ PC

## BATTLE REALMS

■ Publisher: **Crave/Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Liquid Entertainment**  
■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **US**

→ Electronic Arts simply has to be kicking themselves for letting spiteful Westwood talk them out of teaming with Crave to publish ex-Westwood employee Ed DelCastillo's nearly complete, eagerly anticipated samurai-and-sorcery RTS. Luckily, Ubi was more than happy to honor DeCastillo's Liquid with a co-publishing deal. The game just keeps looking better, thanks to a sensible, organic resource system; beautiful, Asian-influenced art design; and imaginatively designed units imbued with lush animations and next-level AI.



■ The game features many powerful individual characters to complement the more common units. The Wolf Clan's Shale Lord is the lobo-looking fellow shown here.



# PLAYSTATION 2 ICO

■ Publisher: SCEA ■ Developer: SCEA  
■ Release Date: August ■ Orig: US

**E** This thinking person's action title has discarded its original bright, colorful art style for a much more atmospheric, incredibly realistic look. The story is based upon a boy born with horns and his quest to rescue a princess from a castle inhabited by living shadows. The graphics are stunning, but the gameplay will be the key. If the puzzles are creative and compelling, the game will be wonderful. If they're uninspired, it'll be a snore.



■ The puzzles center upon the princess, who must be led, Lemmings-like, through every obstacle.



■ Shooters don't get much better — or better-looking — than Treasure's work.

## ■ ARCADE

# IKARUGA

■ Publisher: Treasure (Japan) ■ Developer: Treasure  
■ Release Date: Q4 (Japan) ■ Orig: Japan

Treasure's incredible arcade/Saturn shooter Rodion Silvergun never made it to the States despite the fact that it's widely regarded as one of the greatest shooters of all time. Hopefully the company's second arcade shooter, set to blast its way into Japanese arcades this winter, will fare better. It uses Sega's Naomi board, so a Dreamcast port is possible, if not exactly likely.

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# →Milestones



■ This screen isn't upside down — you are. The first-person view enables you to ride your twisted (both literally and figuratively) creations.



■ Players can choose to construct coasters in response to computer challenges in Mission mode, or play Free Form mode and run wild.



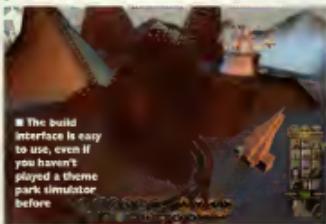
■ PC

## ULTIMATE RIDE

■ Publisher: Disney Interactive ■ Developer: Disney Interactive

■ Release Date: September ■ Orig: US

→ While games like SimCoaster and RollerCoaster Tycoon go for the overall theme park simulation, this upcoming title from Disney Interactive focuses tightly on creating and riding the coasters themselves. Players select from three themes (Jules Verne, Dragon's Realm, and Space), then choose to construct either a steel, wooden, or hanging coaster. The coasters can then be ridden in first-person view thanks to a speedy (and proprietary) 3D engine.



■ The build interface is easy to use, even if you haven't played a theme park simulator before.



■ PLAYSTATION 2

## JAMES BOND 007... AGENT UNDER FIRE

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: Electronic Arts

■ Release Date: Q4 ■ Orig: US

→ EA's first PS2 Bond title feels more like two games in one: a GoldenEye-style FPS, and a mission-based vehicular combat title similar to Bond Racing or Midway's upcoming Spy Hunter. In the all-new storyline, Bond must defeat an evil mastermind's army of clones (that's one way to get out of designing new enemy models). Of course, Q's gadgets and a bevy of deadly beauties will be there to make things interesting.



■ James Bond never seems to run out of attractive women to rescue from the clutches of evil.



■ The vehicular segments (below) are similar to EA's recent (and misleadingly titled) mission-oriented PSone driving title, James Bond Racing.



■ PLAYSTATION 2

# MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM ZEONIC FRONT

■ Publisher: Bandai ■ Developer: Bandai  
■ Release Date: October ■ Origin: Japan

→ Hot on the heels of Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Joburo (see last issue) comes this title, which matches the former's graphical prowess and mixes in Rainbow Six-style squad-based tactical elements. The player commands up to three separate groups of three mobile suits. Interestingly, the heroic Earth Federation units are the enemy this time around, with the player controlling the invading Zeonic forces.



■ Though it looks similar to Bandai's other Gundam game, Journey to Joburo, this new title features squad-based play.



■ PLAYSTATION 2

# GALLOP RACER 2001

■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Tecmo  
■ Release Date: August ■ Origin: Japan



■ Like the cars in an auto racing game, each of the over 1,500 horses in Gallop Racer 2001 has different strengths and weaknesses.

Given the moderate success in the U.S. of rhythm games like Dance Dance Revolution (formerly thought "too Japanese" for U.S. gamers), is it any surprise that Tecmo continues to wager that another Japanese staple, the horse racing sim, is next in line? Most of the player's time in Gallop Racer 2001 is spent jockeying a 40,000-polygon mount through actual races, but about 20% of the game involves breeding, managing, and even betting on the horses.



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11:40 PM - WHEELS CHANGED.  
17th POSITION.

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GUARD RAIL.  
15th POSITION.**

**4 am - TWELVE HOURS DOWN  
AND TWELVE TO GO.  
200 MILES PER HOUR  
ZERO MARGIN FOR ERROR.**



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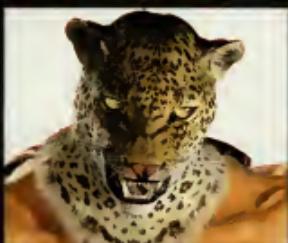


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■ Objects in the level aren't just eye candy. Back an opponent into this statue, for example, and you'll gain a definite advantage





## ■ ARCADE (SYSTEM 246)

# TEKKEN 4

■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco** ■ Release Date: **Summer** ■ Origin: **Japan**

→ The Tekken series ruled the 32-bit PlayStation era with — to borrow the name of the tournament in which its combatants fought — an iron fist. So it was no surprise to see Tekken Tag Tournament (a .5 arcade product if ever one existed) show up as a graphically enhanced PlayStation 2 title. Despite the game's commercial success, however, it wasn't the

true sequel to the series that the team had hoped to make, owing to Namco's insistence on having a Tekken title for PS2 launch. "Tekken Tag was released on PlayStation 2, but let's say it's still a PlayStation title," confides Tekken 4 Project Leader Kimoto Masahiro. "I mean, we just didn't have sufficient time." But now with TTT out the door, the team is finally back on track to free the series



■ As always, the opening cinematics will impress even the assembly line

# →Special



■ Players will still need to memorize lots of combos if they want to be effective fighters



from its 32-bit shackles in spectacular fashion. Enter *Tekken 4*...

Graphically, the game is everything you would expect from a top Namco team working on PlayStation 2-based System 246 hardware. The *Tekken* Tog engine has been almost completely rewritten for this endeavor, which enables the team not only to display extremely detailed characters and backgrounds, but to push the resolution up to 640 x 480. This high resolution provides an incredibly sharp image and handily resolves many of PS2's inherent graphical problems — including the notorious lack of anti-aliasing that plagued many of the first PS2 titles.

This added level of detail also provides the game with the most realistic visuals in the series yet. In fact, the team is trying to bring *Tekken* back down to Earth, so to speak, with environments players might actually see in the real world. "The game is more of a street fight, and in this sense, there are more urban scenes," confirms Masahiro. "We tried to include more realism this time and leave out all the strange stuff. I think that, until now, the series has offered too many places nobody would normally go. So in *Tekken 4* we decided to design more common locations."

The reality theme applies to the character designs as well. The team feels that the over-powered bosses and larger-than-life characters of the last installment pushed the series

too far in the fantasy direction. Masahiro explains the problem his team is facing: "If we continue on *Tekken 3*'s path, then what next? The series would lose its fun. That doesn't mean that *Tekken 4* won't have strange characters at all; it's just that the game will be more reasonable — maybe closer to *Tekken 1*."

Already confirmed on the roster are slightly older versions of some old favorites like Paul Phoenix, King, Marshall Law, and Hwoarang, as well as new characters like Christie Montelro, Craig Marduk, and Steve Fox. Unfortunately, the team does not want to reveal more information regarding the new character roster, and is waiting until

the game is closer to release.

Still, in a year of heavy hitters like *VF4* (see page 49), *Soul Calibur 2*, and *DOA 3*, graphics alone aren't going to be enough; the team needs to enhance gameplay as well. One of the major changes in this department is the jump to full 3D movement. Unlike past iterations, which kept opponents more or less harnessed on a 2D plane, *Tekken 4* enables players to move freely in the world. But the team doesn't want to eliminate jumping and ducking, so it's come up with a unique solution. Masahiro explains: "The joystick is digital and made up of two crosses — one in the shape of a plus (up, down, left,

and right) and the second including the diagonals. As you push on the plus, your character will move on the field. Then if you push the diagonals, the same character will perform an offensive jump in front of him or slide, etc." It's too early to tell if this solution is as elegant as it sounds or whether it will needlessly complicate things, but one thing's for certain: If it works, expect it to be stolen by dozens of other teams who are looking for a practical way to integrate 3D movement into their fighting game.

Aside from the movement, though, the actual fighting mechanics appear very similar to previous installments. The team has done away with the tag





Both the characters and the locations in *Tekken 4* will have a more realistic slant than in the last installment



## "We tried to include more realism and leave out all the strange stuff."

— Keisuke Matsubara, *Tekken 4* project leader, Namco

combat (and tag button) from the last game, returning instead to the "pure form" of one-on-one combat and four buttons: two punches and two kicks. Special moves are still pulled off

with stick/button combinations, and it's still possible to string certain segments of moves together into insanely long combos. Interestingly enough, Masahiro claims that he tried to find a freer, non-predetermined combo system in which players could string moves together as they wanted, but it just wasn't as much fun as the one they'd already been using. "I think it is really difficult to make a totally free combat system," he admits. "I have already studied this issue and made a test. If the player can perform what he wants, freely,

■ 3D movement has been emphasized and should add a whole new level of depth to the game

the game rapidly loses its fun."

One thing that promises to change the dynamic of each fight is the fact that contests are going to be staged in contained areas as opposed to the infinitely wide-open spaces of the predecessors. "In previous episodes we had the unlimited field," explains Lead Designer Yonemori Yuichi. "We fought in environments that were totally independent from the fight. This time the action and the environment are integrated. When you walk to a wall, you are really getting closer to it. Based on this new relationship with the environment, the game changes a lot."

Currently, the team is doing a lot of experimenting with what

does and doesn't work in the new environments. They may have found some inspiration in *Soul Calibur*'s design as they attempt to make the stages look real and, taking it a step further, interactive. "The stages are not in standard square shapes," Masahiro explains. "We designed them to look natural. For example, if the characters have to fight in an apartment, we will design it to look as a standard apartment — not a square disguised in an apartment. We are just starting to work on this issue so we are thinking about many fun features. Elements like boxes could fall, and so on."

*Tekken 4* probably won't revolutionize the way we look at fighting games, but it's got the right moves to be a strong competitor in the battle to become the latest, greatest fighting game. As the game will also be a shoe-in port to PS2, it's not too hard to predict Namco's fighting franchise's future. Once again, it'll be back on top. — Blaize Fischer/Christophe Kogotani



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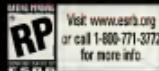
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**→** In a hall of E3 fanfare, GameCube went from unknown console entity to a system with a powerful launch line-up. We now present to you Nintendo's first round of games, developed under the watchful eye of master designer Shigeru Miyamoto. (As a bonus, we've even thrown in some shots of EA's *Madden* for GameCube.)

But does Nintendo have the ammo it needs to conquer the console industry again? Do family-friendly games such as *Luigi's Mansion*, or the edgier *Eternal Darkness*, have what it takes? After seeing it all, we believe *Rogue Squadron II* remains the number one reason to buy a GameCube thus far. And where the hell is Mario? Peter Main tells us more games will be unveiled at August Spaceworld. Until then, here's what GameCube has to offer.



## THE GAMECUBE ROUND-UP

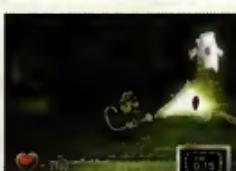
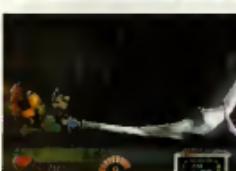
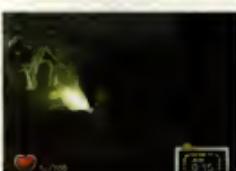
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■ Luigi's Mansion is something of a cross between Ghostbusters and a fishing game. Players guide Luigi around his newly inherited haunted mansion, reeling in ghosts like fish on a line. Although the game resembles a cartoon, GameCube's lighting effects mirror the real world.



# LUIGI'S MANSION

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Nintendo** ■ Release Date: **November**

## Mario's brother finally gets his big break

→ The notorious Second Fiddle society, whose roster includes such has-beens and never-weres as Art Garfunkel, the other guy from Wham!, and John Oates, will see its membership shrink in rather short order; perennial videogame guest star and bit player Luigi will lose his membership card when he steps out from his superstar brother Mario's immense shadow with the release of Luigi's Mansion.

"Luigi's Mansion is a massive game," says

Nintendo Director of Game Evaluation, Ken Lobb. "Mt. Miyamoto knew it would be a GameCube title, and he's been working on the design for 18-plus months."

The high concept of Luigi's Mansion has the green-hatted hero inheriting a creaky old mansion that happens to be infested with spooks and specters. Armed with a flashlight and a ghost-busting vacuum cleaner, Luigi must work his way through haunted rooms sucking up paranormal

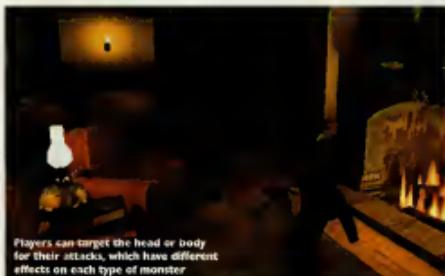
pests. Capturing the ghosts plays a lot like a fishing game. When a room has been successfully de-ghosted, players can scoop up bonus coins.

Equally bold and beautiful, Mansion establishes GameCube as a graphics powerhouse. Realtime lighting and shading ensure that creepy shadows are thrown across every floor and hallway of this maniac mansion. Sharp particle effects and environments that actually quiver when exposed to the suction of Luigi's vacuum add considerable punch to the proceedings.

Still, this Ghostbusters takeoff smacks of Nintendo's signature "family fun" and has the potential to get a little repetitive. Unless a dose of adrenaline is administered soon, Luigi's Mansion may sell a million copies, but get by more on marketing than merit. — Greg Orlando

# →Cover Story

HERE COMES GAMECUBE



Players can target the head or body for their attacks, which have different effects on each type of monster



■ Pius Augustus, Centurion of the Roman Army, is one of 12 playable characters

## ETERNAL DARKNESS

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Silicon Knights ■ Release Date: December

More than Resident Evil with unlimited ammo...

**E**ternal Darkness is built to disturb you in the same vein as *Rosemary's Baby* and *Psycho*. Players can expect their eyes to deceive them, the game to lie to them, and all manner of impossibilities to be presented as fact.

*Eternal Darkness'* 12 playable roles span 2,000 years of history, and the game follows the central character of Alex as she finds a book whose stories take her into the diverse cast of other characters. Playables in the demo include Alex, a Roman centurion, and a Templar knight. Not playable were an action-oriented archaeologist

similar to Indiana Jones and a Franciscan Monk who'll be called upon to solve puzzles.

What sets apart *Eternal Darkness* from other horror games is a fiendish "insanity meter" that can cause hallucinations, dream sequences portending a character's demise, and the seeming disappearance of a full inventory. It will also, though not included in our E3 demo, tweak camera angles to alter perspective.

Although *Eternal Darkness* will take about 40 hours to finish, there are enough options to make it worth playing several times. "Similar

to the movies *Go* and *Pulp Fiction*, you get different perspectives on the same timeline of the story," explains Nintendo Producer Henry Sterchi. "You don't realize the significance of your decisions until you play through the game and see the impact of your choices."

*Eternal Darkness'* smart camera system seems to address the usual problems that plague most third-person adventures. To facilitate combat, the view tightens behind a character but expands to a more overhead view during exploration. A big plus is the minimal load times between rooms — a welcome

contrast to most PS2 games. "There actually were no load times," reveals Sterchi, "but people were getting disoriented when they entered new rooms, so we put in that brief black transition."

*Eternal Darkness* is far from finished, but what was shown at E3 held much promise for Nintendo fans less interested in karting. If the game delivers the mind-bending experience it promises, it will be a fearsome piece of GameCube ammunition. If it delivers even half of that, it will make the anticipation for its release seem nothing short of, well, eternal. — Greg Orlando

**I** What sets apart *Eternal Darkness* from other horror games is a fiendish "insanity meter" that can cause hallucinations, dream sequences portending a character's demise, and the seeming disappearance of a full inventory.



■ Players assume either aggressive or intimidated stances according to the number of enemies faced in each room or hallway





■ Much like its predecessor, Wave Race Blue Storm will offer a variety of tracks, including another glacier course, and fantastic reflective effects on the water



■ Players can determine weather conditions for each course

## WAVE RACE BLUE STORM

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: NST ■ Release Date: November

An N64 favorite gets a new coat of paint and a monstrous new engine under the hood

When Wave Race Blue Storm footage was shown at Spaceworld 2000, the gathered throng shouted with approval. But could it make the transition from pre-rendered tech demo to playable game in time for E3? It did, though it opted for a "more of the same" vein rather than a radically new game.

In fact, of the three playable tracks at E3 (out of the eight tracks planned), one course was identical to a level from the N64 version of

the game, so it offered some easy comparison. Once again, players race against seven other watercraft around tracks under diverse weather conditions, weaving through buoys and performing tricks to earn turbo power-ups and over ramps to cut corners. Turning and accelerating are smooth and intuitive, and the tricks are handled in precisely the same way as the original. Pulling back and then pushing forward on the thumbpad just after a launch executes a front

flip, while shifting hard from one side of the pad to the other pulls off a barrel roll.

Clearly the biggest change in this Wave Race is the spectacular improvement in graphics. The water effects are simply stunning, with excellent reproductions of wake, volume, and reflections — and in some cases water even splashes onto the virtual lens and produces a distorted effect. As the race progresses, the water level actually drops, forcing players to rethink

some previously accessible routes.

Nintendo's second-party group, Nintendo Software Technology, based in Redmond, WA, has been working on the title for some time. And remember this is the same developer who turned out Ridge Racer 64 and *Pokémon Puzzle League*, so it has plenty of experience working with and improving on established franchises. The Wave Race Blue Storm just hasn't fallen far from the tree, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. — Jim Preston

# → Cover Story



■ Dinosaur Planet for N64 was basically finished, minus some final testing, before it added the Fox character and received a GameCube facelift



## STAR FOX ADVENTURES: DINOSAUR PLANET

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Rare** ■ Release Date: **November**

**Our old friend Fox reappears for a different kind of trip**

→ Showing up for the first time since Star Fox 64, Fox McCloud and friends team up to free a prehistoric world from the clutches of the dastardly General Scales. Like all Star Fox games, it includes some flight-combat segments, but the majority of the game plays almost exactly like The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, from the familiar third-person perspective right down to the Z-button for lock-on targeting. You must guide Fox through some truly enormous and gorgeous worlds,

the total size of which is about twice that of Zeldas. But Star Fox also shares traits with another GameCube title.

"Star Fox and Etemon Dorkness are similar in that they both started life as an N64 product," says Nintendo's Ken Lobb. "There's a huge advantage to that, as you end up with a launch game that doesn't feel like a launch game. Dinosaur Planet, which is what this game started out as, was in development for about two and a half years before it shifted to GameCube

around 10 months ago. The art is being redone, but the asset that we cared most about bringing across [from the N64 version] is the game design."

The gameplay involves teaming up with various creatures, such as a helpful triceratops or a fearsome pterodactyl, or using Fox's own hand-to-hand — or paw-to-paw, as the case may be — combat. There is going to be a robust spell and item system in the game accessible through a series of sub-menus. And

Fox is going to be able to take on different forms, thanks to the shape-shifting powers of his staff.

The 30-person Star Fox team is Rare's largest and most tenured team, including veterans of projects such as Killer Instinct, Donkey Kong Country 3, and Bonjo-Kozzole. Although its work must seem like it's been going on forever, the team has established a foundation on Nintendo's last console that should enable Star Fox to hit the ground running at launch. — Jim Preston



■ In addition to running around battling enemies on the planet's surface (left), players will fly Arwing combat missions in space, in traditional Star Fox fashion



■ At E3, Madden looked as good on GameCube as it did on PS2, and better than the Xbox version. Good news for Nintendo: you can't compete without Madden



■ Features new to the GameCube version include a two-minute drill that increases the intensity as the clock ticks down

# MADDEN NFL 2002

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: Electronic Arts ■ Release Date: November

## A new console? Here comes Madden...

→ Expect EA's newest 10-yard fight to hold a new training mode where Coach Madden himself explains and diagrams the various plays, as well as a frantic "two-minute drill" mode that tasks an offense to score points under an extreme time limit.

As this console standby comes to GameCube, EA has implemented a new face- and body-shape tech-

nology; gone are the cold and soulless player visages that haunted Madden 2001 for PS2.

"GameCube can push more polys around with higher-resolution textures than PlayStation 2," says Jeremy Mauser, senior producer for Madden NFL 2002. "We were able to make blockers react more intelligently in pass blocking, run blocking, and open-field blocking

situations. To see a pulling guard just pancake a cornerback who presses up is a beautiful thing."

Though the law of diminishing returns dictates that Madden NFL 2002 won't be exponentially better than the near-flawless Madden 2001, players should delight at the game's ever-upward trend — and its new face on a new console.

— Greg Orlando



# NBA COURTSIDE 2002

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Left Field Productions ■ Release Date: November

## Does Left Field have next?

→ With EA's Madden filling its football category, Nintendo has tapped Left Field for basketball. Left Field, in turn, tapped the L.A. Lakers' Kobe Bryant. The developer motion-captured Bryant performing his own moves and emulating those of everyone from Allen Iverson to Tim Duncan.

Left Field has done an incredible job with reference photos to capture the likeness of each player. "These are the most realistic heads you're going to find in a game today," claims Nintendo Associate Producer Tim Bechtel. The resemblance doesn't stop there: Star players will even have their appropriate tattoos.

A new C-stick passing scheme enables you to move your player with the main analog stick, and, with a quick tap on the C-stick, drop a

no-look pass to your teammate. In addition to the standard turbo feature, an adrenaline button, when used properly, enables you to perform elaborate moves that can

result in monster dunks or steals. Still, after a few trips up and down the court, this one still has a way to go before it'll be considered ready for the pros.

— Kevin Toyomo



■ Using your adrenaline button results in fancier dunks, but gives defenders more time to go for the block.

# →Cover Story



■ As opponents pummel your meter down to zero, you become more vulnerable to being tossed out of the "ring."

## SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

■ Publisher **Nintendo** ■ Developer **Nintendo** ■ Release Date **November**

### Return of the Button Smashers

→ Super Smash Bros. Melee picks up where the Nintendo 64 beat-'em-up Super Smash Bros. left off — that is, with all of Nintendo's lovable characters gathering to beat each other insensate. This one- to four-player game features such Nintendo mainstays as Mario, Donkey Kong, and Pikachu, as well as some new bruisers with Bowser, Princess Peach, and Ice Climber (who appeared in Ice Climber for N64).

"You think this is just a simplistic game," says Nintendo's Ken Lobb, "but when you play against people who know what they're doing, it's as deep as any fighting game ever made. That's amazing when you consider this game

uses only three buttons."

Especially important as each character's offensive moves is the skill with which they can keep from being knocked off the platforms — the ultimate goal, after all, is the videogame equivalent of King of the Hill.

More means better, and Nintendo has added a side-scrolling feature to the single-player mode, a brand-new tournament option that will support 64 contestants, as well as a trophy gallery with hundreds of Nintendo character trophies to earn. Nothing revolutionary here in terms of gameplay, but Super Smash Bros. Melee should attract its share of button mashers. — Greg Orlando



■ Old and new friends, such as Ness, Donkey Kong, Samus, Link, and Captain Falcon, gather as Super Smash Bros. Melee characters.



■ Like ants, Pikmin can collectively perform a task that a solo Pikmin cannot.

## PIKMIN (TENTATIVE)

■ Pub. **Nintendo** ■ Dev. **Nintendo** ■ Rel. Date **December**

### Is it RTS or ant farm? Try a little of both

■ Has Shigeru Miyamoto, the man who's created many of the best games ever, finally gone off the deep end? Miyamoto has created the kooky "inventive life simulation" Pikmin, part realtime strategy and all weird. The single-player Pikmin takes its inspiration and design from Miyamoto's garden; the game features an unnamed bulbous-nosed spaceman who crash-lands on an alien planet and must make use of native plant creatures (called "Pikmin") to recover all the pieces of his demolished spaceship. "After playing Pikmin, kids will want to explore their own backyard in search of Pikmin sprouts," he says about his newest game.

A cross between the Teletubbies and the Morolans from Space Channel 5, the cutesy Pikmin may become Nintendo's next merchandising bonanza. Will it become the next addictive videogame? Like other RTS-style titles, it may appeal to gamers who can sit down and play for hours at a time, but we found it was tedious to complete the first few objectives. This is probably not going to be the cup of tea for those who want a "pick up and play" experience. — Greg Orlando



■ The spaceman must care for the creatures, which in turn will be able to perform such necessary functions as carrying objects.



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EVERYONE  
Animated Violence  
Mild Language



With GameCube in hand, Nintendo's Peter Molyneux is off to another meeting. The meeting's subject? Plotting the demise of Xbox and PlayStation 2, of course.

■ PETER MAIN IS ...

# MOVING FORWARD WITH GAMECUBE



After losing its long-held number one spot to PlayStation, Nintendo's Peter Main expects GameCube to carry the company back to the top

**NEXT GENERATION:** The general public got its first taste of GameCube games at E3. How many total first-party games will they see at launch? **PETER MAIN:** Six or seven, depending on what's ready. The launch time for us is Nov. 5 to Dec. 5; I'm talking about it in a 30-day timeframe. Could it be seven [launch titles] on day one? I don't know, but it'll be there before holiday.

**NG:** Fair enough. Are you going to hit your announced Nov. 5 launch date?

**PM:** We're doing it. It's very important. In Japan, it's clearly important for our parent company to come off the roaring success of GBA and leverage that to a strong start this time around. [Nintendo of Japan] really has to make its date in September, which is why they've got fewer titles than we do at the get-go. We can't give Sony two holiday seasons uncontested. Nobody knows if Xbox will make it [to stores on Nov. 8, 2001], but we'll be there for sure.

**NG:** Gearing up for that November release, how will it differ from N64's launch?

**Did you lose a lot of third-party publisher support the last time around?**

**PM:** Big time. There were a lot of reasons we did what we did in the N64 days, and the results are there to look at. Our failure to achieve a dominant position had less to do with price point and more to do with not having enough genres of

**significant impact on Nintendo?**

**PM:** In every dark day there's a little bit of light. During those four or five years, third-party publishers justifiably said [N64] is a bad economic deal at the end of the day — cartridges, lead times, investments, etc. We had a choice during those days to say OK, for better or worse, whatever Miyamoto can do for us is what we'll do. Or secondly, we'll fold our tent and get out of the business for a few years so we can sort this out. Or thirdly, and this is what we did, we can build on what we have in-house with more out-of-house, complementary skills. That's why Nintendo took one of its big assets, its balance sheet, and made investments in Left Field and Retro Studios, and expanded the Brownie Brownie and Hal [Laboratories] of Japan. So today, if we had to do it

developers around the world we have working on this thing. We're really pleased with the long line of old, familiar faces that we haven't seen in recent times in our offices. They're saying, "Let's go again — you're talking our language. The royalty rate, turnaround time, and minimum quantities are right, and most importantly, it looks like a really good platform."

**NG:** How do you deal with Microsoft and Sony wooling these same game companies?

**PM:** Third-party publishers know our price list, and it's very similar to anything that's out there. We know that's consistent. What may be in question is marketing money. On the one hand, there was someone [Microsoft] who had no stake in the business and at any cost had to get

**"We can't give Sony two holiday seasons uncontested. Nobody knows if [Xbox] will make it [to stores on November 8, 2001], but we'll be there for sure."**

— Nintendo Executive VP of Sales and Marketing Peter Main

software. The role of third-party is changing. It's becoming an equalizer. In this round, and if a game's coming out on all platforms, it better be on yours, and it better look as good as it can look. We're so glad to have products like Madden, and stuff from Activision, LucasArts, and Konami — these guys are all working on product for us.

**NG:** Surely the lack of third-party games for N64 had a sig-

sign on our own, and I don't want to say we want to for a moment, we'd be in a lot better shape than we ever were before.

**NG:** So you do have the support of third-party publishers this time?

**PM:** How many developers [we have] is not what it's all about, even though we're pretty smug in knowing the number of developer kits we have out and how many

in. They went to a variety of developers and agreed to pay in essence, 100% of development costs with no strings attached, which had a lot of developers [coming] here and saying they have free goods that they can port to our system.

**NG:** Sounds like a good deal for you.

**PM:** And [Microsoft] paid for the whole deal... We've been in the

# HERE COMES GAMECUBE → Cover Story

business for a few years, and we didn't do any deals like that. For better or worse, a \$10 royalty plus the cost of their goods is about the same deal that all three companies are running on.

**NG: Before GameCube's price was announced, Nintendo Director Satoru Iwata told us Nintendo may have to take its first loss on hardware. Has that concern become a reality?**

**PM:** A very small one, and although I can't quantify the loss, it's minimal. We heard all this stuff last year about Sony losing \$150 to \$175 (per PS2), and now there are indications that the build-out price for Xbox is somewhere between \$450 and \$500. We're not talking about that high of differentials — we're talking about really minute differences. We don't like losing money on anything, but what we're losing is very moderate at the outset, and we'll be in great shape pretty quickly as the production yields go up.

**NG: Then what factors determined the \$199 price?**

**PM:** There was a lot of observation going on throughout the first days of the show, monitoring what was being said — whether people were perplexed or if they seemed to "get it." That was all collected and fed back to Japan on the weekend. We gave a consensus report, and I think what [Nintendo President Hiroshi] Yamauchi thought was rather than worrying about breaking even or not breaking even, we're pretty close, so let's take the loss and go for the mass-market price.

We certainly haven't shown everything yet, but you'll see more in August.

**NG: Does that mean we'll see Mario introduced at Spaceworld?**

**PM:** I can't talk about it today, but will we unveil something that shows the interface between Game Boy Advance and GameCube? Yes, we will, but I can't go beyond that.

**NG: Back to pricing, how would it have changed if EB attendees had an indifferent response to the games?**

**PM:** It sounds strange, but had the reception been lukewarm, Yamauchi might've been prone to

come out at \$249 or \$299. He'd go with the flow and make sure he doesn't lose too much money on the hardware, and hope like heck that the software guys experience some big improvement in the next six months. So he had his options, but it's the reverse of what you might think — you would've thought that if he questioned

encel is an interlocked equation.

I'm not here to analyze what's good or bad about Sony, but I think last year is a good example of what can happen. They had a really solid global success with PlayStation, and then they got all these hardware guys who said they can double the values in this and that, and they can improve its adaptability as a set-top

thing overrides all this: What's the better product? This isn't Nintendo beating its chest, but we're not going to take GameCube Metroid and depress its potential to sell a million copies in order to make our percentages look right. The truth is, you've got games like the Metros, Metroids, Donkey Kongs, and Zeldas that come out of the box and sell 2 to 3 million pieces. That creates this numbers game. But we're interested in anything on a quality basis that can add uniqueness to our mix.

I don't think it'll be 50-50 this time — maybe closer to 35-65, but we won't be 20-80 like Sony [Sony's ratio] is a function of what they did or didn't have internally, and how in many cases second- and third-party games sold stronger than some of their first-party titles.

**NG: How important is it to change your perception as a kids-game company?**

**PM:** We've had relative levels of success with Perfect Dark and Conker, but [to capture the older market, it's] really about a lot of pure sports, which EA brings to the equation, and some of which we'll get from Left Field. It's about doing better forms of Wave Race; it's about product from Silicon Knights. We do not, under any circumstance, walk away from that Holy Grail called "Nintendo family-style" product. We clearly have our focus and will hold onto [our core audience] and do a better job with the other groups.

— Peter Main

**"We're pretty smug in knowing the number of developer kits we have out and how many developers around the world we have working on this thing."**

GameCube's viability that he'd [aunch it at a lower price] to push it over the top. It was the reverse of that.

**NG: Why not abandon hardware altogether and play to your software strengths?**

**PM:** What's different about us is that while we honestly believe the quality of the software is a function of how the software is designed, a large part of the success comes from Miyamoto and his teams telling the hardware guys what kind of platform they need. That's why we don't believe Luigi's Mansion and other titles ported over to a PC or another console would be the same game. The whole [gaming exper-

ience] is so all this stuff is thrown together and all of a sudden all the poor software guys say, "This is a nightmare! How do I program for it?" It'll be a frosty day when that kind of thing takes place with us by virtue of how we go about the development process.

**NG: Are you concerned about a continued dependence on first-party product?**

**PM:** It's a real conundrum when people ask that. We're 50-50 [on the ratio of internal/external product]; Sony's 20-80. That equation is a function of two things: How much internal product we've got, and how much external product we're chasing. Then a third

**NG: So, moving forward...**

**PM:** [As an industry] we have reason to be optimistic. Lessons were learned, and the industry didn't go out of business. In our case, our shortfall was we didn't cover all the genres adequately, and that hurt us. We didn't ring the bells with some of the right groups, but we will this time. — Kevin Toyama



# PLAY OR BE PLAYED



## the electric playground

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# RUNE

## VIKING WARSLORD

One unstoppable Viking on the road to Valhalla.



PlayStation.2



TANDEM

# → Finals

It's a month for cars, both crazy and flat-out homicidal. Take your pick — but choose wisely



## PlayStation 2

Twisted Metal Black	80
Crazy Taxi	82
Dark Cloud	82
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	82
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	82



■ PLAYSTATION 2

# Twisted Metal Black

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Developer: Insomniac

## An ode to the best car combat ever conceived

**E** We've returned to the Twisted Metal tournament, but it's not what we remember. This is *Twisted Metal Black*, both a sequel to and departure from the PlayStation series. The gameplay dynamics that were laid down in the original two *Twisted Metal* games have returned, but the atmosphere is forcibly, even demandingly Gothic. It's not possible anymore

just to pick up the controller and ignore the world around you.



■ Giving "defensive driving" a new spin

This time everyone's going to have to wallow in the darkness.

The history behind the *Twisted Metal* franchise is a long and complicated one. It will suffice here to say that the creative team behind *Block* is essentially made up of the same people who designed the first two *Twisted Metal* games — as opposed to the butchers at 989 Studios who sent the series spiraling down the toilet with the splashdown *TM3* and *TM4*.

Everything about the gameplay, in fact, feels like an

extension of *Twisted Metal 2*, in the best ways possible. The cars have realistic weight and believable turn ratios, but there's no other attempt to make them behave like real cars. It is possible — and sometimes necessary — to turn a vehicle while it's in mid-air, or even while at a complete stop, and after a few encounters you develop a sense of just how to use your vehicle as a battering ram to force opponents off the road and into other combatants.



## Dreamcast

Crazy Taxi 2



## PlayStation

World's Scariest Police Chases

83

KISS Pinball

Dave Mirra Maximum Remix



## EPC

Operation Flashpoint

89

Pearl Harbor: Defend the Fleet

89

Tropico

89

Cultures

90

Echelon

90

Half-Life: Blue Shift

90

## The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at Next Generation will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ REVOLUTIONARY

★★★★★ EXCELLENT

★★★★★ GOOD

★★★★★ FAIR

★★★★★ BAD

Denotes a review of a Japanese product

When faced with an opponent more heavily armored or just plain bigger than you, however, you'll want above all to avoid collision, and this is where Block's diverse lineup of power-ups and weapons comes into play. Each vehicle has a special weapon associated with it, and there are 10 additional weapons lying around that can be picked up and used. In addition, there are also several special moves that can be performed on the D-pad or left analog stick, which are powered by their own regenerating energy bar. The specials, which include such moves as jumping straight into the air, freezing opponents, and turning invisible, become critical to success in the later, brutally difficult stages of the game.

Even the early stages can be daunting at first. Each level is brilliantly designed with myriad

hidden items, shortcuts, and ambush points; many of the areas rival those in Smuggler's Run for sheer size and are far more complex. In addition, you'll have to contend with pedestrians and non-combatant automobile traffic. Luckily these ordinary mortals are hardly matches for the supernatural freak show competing in the tournament; cars and buildings are both easily dispatched with machine-gun fire or a head-on collision.

Graphically, *Twisted Metal Block* leaps and bounds beyond anything we've seen before in the genre. Running at a smooth 60fps even in four-player, splitscreen mode, the graphics engine still manages to chum out incredible lighting effects, impressive weather effects, and textures rich enough to silence even the toughest of PS2 critics.

Get a few of those critics

## TWISTED METAL ONLINE

Shortly before we went to press, SCEA announced an add-on pack to be released for *Twisted Metal Block* this fall. Being developed under the working title *Twisted Metal Online*, the add-on will make Block one of the first PS2 games to be playable online, alongside *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*, *Tribes 2*, and *SOCOM: US Navy Seals*. No further details were available at press time, but just the idea is enough to get our engines revving.



■ The multiplayer modes are every bit as zippy and stable as the single-player

together and they'll agree that, in its multiplayer modes, *Block* excels beyond any reasonable expectation. Tracking your chosen rival is easy thanks to onscreen, color-coded arrows. There are options for team play as well as straight deathmatch, and it's even possible to play through the Story mode as a two-player co-op team.

This is not a game that will sit idle should you be spending the day solo, however. The Story mode is fully fleshed out with

involved backstories and cinematics for each combatant, as well as seemingly countless features to unlock. It is in the Story mode, with its bloody touches, haunting soundtrack, and abundance of homicidal killers, that you experience the full impact of *Twisted Metal* as something more graphic, disturbing, and artistic than anything that's come before it. Let the dripping blood and laughing clown ring in a new age in game design. — Daniel Erickson



■ No one is safe on the roads and alleyways (and sidewalks, and living rooms) of *Twisted Metal Block*'s dangerous and grimy milieu

## NextGen



**Bottom Line:** The best car combat game in history is also the most creative. Go get it.



■ PLAYSTATION 2

## Crazy Taxi

■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Sega/Acclaim

Sometimes reaching perfection means not changing a thing



■ A little less flashy but just as fun, Crazy Taxi rocks on PS2

→ The first of the Sega games has arrived on PlayStation 2, and even though it's nothing but a direct port of the Dreamcast game, Crazy Taxi is a great addition to any console's lineup. Taken part-and-parcel from Sega's arcade machine of the same name, this fast-paced game enables you to choose from four different taxi drivers and take to the streets of San Francisco. The goal is simple: Pick up and drop off as many people as possible to score big bucks. Tips are tacked on to the fare for how quickly you make the run and what kind of crazy tricks you do on the way.

Among the tricks that will score you some extra dough are weaving in and out of traffic and driving on two wheels. Combos and bonuses rack up pretty fast if you can keep up this kind of behavior for an extended period of time without running into anything. There are also tons



■ "If you don't like the way I drive, stay off the sidewalk" of shortcuts, ramps, and pedestrians to run down, and a slew of mini-games. It's like being turned loose in a B action movie during the big chase scene.

We know what you're waiting for; however, so here it is: In a head-to-head comparison, the PS2 version of Crazy Taxi takes second place. The textures aren't as crisp or as bright as those on Dreamcast, and it's a bit harder to pull off the various Crazy Drifts and Crazy Boosts that give you an extra edge. The game's still phenomenal, however — just not as phenomenal as the original. — Daniel Erickson

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A near-perfect port of a fantastic game.

## Dark Cloud

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: SCEA ■ Developer: Level 5

Make no mistake: Dark Cloud is basically a Zelda knock-off with a few twists. Even some of the control nuances, like the lock-on button, have been shamelessly stolen from Nintendo's series.

The biggest problem is that the main game consists of trotting through level after level of randomly generated dungeons for long periods of time, which gets old very fast, and eventually becomes almost painful. The other problem is that you must constantly micro-manage the upkeep of your weapon while playing, as it takes damage just like you do. This is

an interesting touch, but quickly becomes tiresome when you have to repair your weapon after every second or third fight.

The action is broken up by an Action-Adventure-style "Gesma" mode, in which you build towns from pieces found in the dungeon. Still, this too gets old, since the process is extremely simple and doesn't require any strategy. The game is also hampered by a clunky interface that makes the simplest task a



■ While Dark Cloud may look good, it gets repetitive after just a few hours

choke of menus and submenus. It looks nice and features some good ideas, but ultimately this just isn't fun. — Blake Fischer

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Not quite Zelda. Not quite Action-Adventure. Not quite fun.

## Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Bizarre Creations

Released on Dreamcast last year, Fur Fighters was a cute game weighed down by a great many gameplay problems. Viggo's Revenge is essentially a port to PS2, and it's even worse; with all the same gameplay problems.

This is a third-person action game in which you control a team of six stuffed animal commandos, each with a specialized skill like tunneling, climbing or jumping. To complete a mission, you must change between the characters constantly — for instance, use the dragon to float Spyro-style over a gorge, switch

to the kangaroo to jump up onto a box, and then switch to the penguin to cross a lake.

Unfortunately the level design is not particularly well-architected, and all that switching back and forth just feels like work. Worse, all through the game the little critters block the camera view, and the awkward control scheme doesn't help.

The new cel-shading technique used here is top-notch,



■ This sequel manages to be even more tedious than the original, no matter how cute

but this didn't impress us before on Dreamcast, and it still doesn't. — Daniel Erickson

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: If you want a shooter or an adventure game, there are better places to turn.

## Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Cewe ■ Developer: Genki

This is a slightly enhanced PS2 port of (you guessed it) Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2 for Dreamcast. As such, it shares almost exactly the same strengths and faults.

The premise is still arguably its best feature: Instead of a fixed distance or number of laps on a closed course, you cruise the highways of Tokyo at night, looking for other car nuts. The race is scored like a fighting game — each car has a meter that drains away when it falls behind, so if you can stay out in front long enough, you win.

The graphics are nice, with all the modern details, including reflection-mapping on the cars and a healthy drift distance — although nothing about it really



■ Racing around Tokyo ought to be a bit more exciting than this

frustrating to round a corner and tag a freight truck, causing you to fall so far behind you haven't a prayer of catching up.

Mostly this is just a unique approach to an unexceptional racer. — Jeff Lundgren

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: This series has its fans, and if we can understand the attraction, we don't share it.

243'11  
game time



DREAMCAST Finals



Once again, there are a ton of mini-games (below), which can earn you all kinds of nifty stuff for use in the main game (above).



DREAMCAST

# Crazy Taxi 2

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Hit Maker

## Still crazy after not even a year

→ The original Crazy Taxi was a big hit for Dreamcast, and deservedly so. Fast-paced, fun, and suitably loopy, it captured an audience and refused to let go, so we're happy to report Crazy Taxi 2 continues that tradition.

There are a number of differences between this and the original, which are notable, though not amazingly significant in how they affect the core gameplay. For one, CT2 is set in a faux New York, rather than a faux San Francisco. The city is laid out rather differently; it's made up of a number of more discrete subdivisions joined

together by long straightaways like the Brooklyn Bridge. The gameplay has been tweaked somewhat away from the series' arcade roots, making the amount of time allowed for each fare somewhat less demanding. At the same time, the shortcuts are trickier to find, extending the replay value and rewarding exploration more. In fact, you really have to start thinking outside the box; many shortcuts can only be reached by using Crazy Jumps and going vertical.

One other nifty difference is that the city is dotted with group fares — small bands of two to

four people, each of whom has a different destination. You gain a multiplier bonus as you drop each one off within the time limit, so the amount of cash you can earn is often astronomical, although naturally, these are the hardest fares to reach in time.

And once again, the main game is supplemented with a compulsive series of mini-games,

## CRAZY BONUSES!

Completing the stages of the Crazy Pyramid earns you all kinds of strange bonus items. The first couple are maps of the two versions of the city, which are handy for planning routes and spotting potential shortcuts. After that, you can unlock a few additional vehicles, including a baby carriage (no, we didn't make that up) and a multi-passenger bicycle that is, oddly enough, the fastest vehicle in the game.

the Crazy Pyramid. These are even more challenging on the whole than the Crazy Box of the original and are sure to not only have you tearing your hair out, but always thinking, "Just one more try..." — Jeff Lundrigan



Something new for CT2: picking up groups and dropping them off all over

## NextGen ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** If you liked the original — and really, who didn't? — there's just as much to like here.



It's all the exciting parts of being a cop, without the waiting around and duds in between

■ PLAYSTATION

## World's Scariest Police Chases

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Unique Development Studios

Get ready to play the other side of *Driver*

→ Despite languishing so long in development, getting passed from publisher to publisher, and arriving at the tail end of PlayStation's lifespan (any one of which would be cause for suspicion, but all three!), *World's Scariest Police Chases* has still turned out to be a notable achievement. Never has a television show been translated so perfectly into a videogame — exciting, over-the-top, and just a bit on the silly side.

All the details are here, from the disclaimer that precedes the intro movie ("Warning: Due to the graphic nature of this game, player discretion is advised") and the melodramatic narration by the show's sheriff, Jon Burnell, to the Replay mode that

features a cinéma-vérité, Cops-esque camerawork view. It's all well-thought-out, finely capturing the spirit of the show.

Playing as a rookie team of officers, one or two players can embark on a series of missions that range from arresting the ordinary DUI to taking down drug smugglers with LAW rockets. Or, if you'd prefer, you can ignore the Mission mode and just cruise the town, taking down suspects at your own pace. Either way, there's a great deal of replay value to be found.

In the two-player mode, one player shoots while the other drives,

— Daniel Erickson

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: More than we expected, *World's Scariest* fully meets its potential.

## KISS Pinball

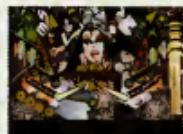
■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Take 2 Interactive

■ Developer: Tarantula Studios

Like a book, you should never judge a videogame by its cover. This is particularly true of *KISS Pinball*, which would love to be mistaken for a home version of Bally's classic 1979 pinball table, *KISS*.

Unfortunately, such is not the case, the rights to that *KISS* pinball are still owned by Midway. Under the makeup, this is a port of an all-new PC *KISS* pinball game, and it's not quite Double Platinum.

There are two playfields to choose from, boasting generous doses of band Imagery. Authentic *KISS* music is notably absent, though you can replace the game disc with the CD of your choice. The action, too, loses the beat sometimes because you can't see the whole playfield at any one time — a perpetual problem in pinball videogames — and the ball physics are slightly off, often sending the



■ Doesn't look like the *KISS* pinball you remember! Well, that's because it isn't

ball careening around the screen without the proper weight and inertia. Finally, there's no two-player option, and the framerate plummets during multi-ball play.

Despite these weaknesses, *KISS* Pinball still delivers the sort of addictive, "just one more game" feeling typical in real pinball. And one thing it does get right is the dirt-cheap \$9.99 price tag. For less than the cost of an actual CD, this is a long-player. — Eric Brothier

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: This is far from the hardest-rocking show in history, but the ticket price is hard to resist.

## Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX: Maximum Remix

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Acclaim Max Sports

■ Developer: Z-Axis

The original *Dave Mirra* wasn't a bad BMX stunt title. The comparison was always "Tony Hawk on a bike" — perhaps not as snappy and intuitive as the Hawk, but with suspiciously similar game mechanics. Still, there were enough original touches that you could sit back and enjoy it. *Maximum Remix* isn't a sequel, just a lot more of the same. It includes the entire contents of the original game, plus eight more tracks and a total of 14 riders.

And really, that's not enough. The graphics engine wasn't that amazing to start with, and it doesn't appear to have been tweaked or upgraded at all in the year since. Every track displays a distracting amount of pop-ins, and while the "Enhanced Skeletal Dynamics System" enables some wild crashes, we would have easily traded that for a more stable environment.



■ *Dave Mirra* isn't the greatest BMX game ever made, but it's not the worst either.

Then again, the trick system is nothing if not flexible. After using one button to jump and a direction on the stick to start a trick, you then hit the circle button to add modifiers while in the air (supposedly there are over a thousand combinations). Grinds are a bit less successful — it feels like you're stuck to the rail and just hanging on for the ride — and course objectives are sometimes frustratingly unclear. — Jeff Lundgren

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It ain't bad, but if you own *Dave Mirra*, there aren't a ton of reasons to buy this.

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**INSIDE:** Brand-new details on DVD features and more!

UNVEILED



# INSIDE THE BOX

## Adventure, excitement, and exhilaration — all you have to do is unwrap it.

**O**ne of the most pivotal, magical moments in a gamer's life is the simple act of unpacking a new console. There's the smell of plastic, the strange new packing materials, the glossy manual, and, of course, the console itself. The weight, the heft, the solid-yet-somehow-still-sleek bulk of a new videogame

console. And let's face it, in the history of videogames, few new boxes have been quite as charismatic or intriguing — or imposing — as the Xbox's.

On November 8, 2001, you'll be able to do just that — slide your Xbox out of its enigmatic obsidian sheath (above left), set it out in front of your TV, and explain to Mom/ Wife/ Significant Other/ Cat that this

will in fact be beneficial to the overall living-room vibe. After all, this is more than a mere game system — it's a complete home-entertainment hub. Xbox will change the way you relax forever.

The Xbox is, of course, more than just a box. For \$299, you take home a system, a controller, and a 10 Gigabyte hard-drive with a broadband Internet connection built right in. No peripherals to buy, no confusion about upgrading in the future. It's all right there in the box. The Ethernet port lets you attach your existing broadband modem — be it cable, DSL, or even satellite — and play a host of impending networked greats, including sports titles from Sega, skateboarding with Tony Hawk, and hyper-realistic racing in *NASCAR Heat*.

### MEMORY CARD



Though the Xbox uses a hard drive for game saves and more, sometimes you'll need portable data, say for taking a custom *Tony Hawk* skater to a pal's house.

## By the Numbers

Available	November 8, 2001
Price	\$299
Approximate number of games at launch	14-20
Number of units by the holiday season	1-1.5 million
Number of plumbers hawking the system	4
Controller ports	4
Reasons not to buy an Xbox	4

## Loud and Clear

Microsoft is pretty darned insistent that it's planning a revolution, not an evolution, and nowhere is that more clear than in the promise of the Xbox Communicator. The headphone and microphone combo plugs into your controller (through one of the two expansion slots, so no tangled wires!) and enables true, clear broadband voice communication with buddies or opponents — depending on what type of language you plan to employ. Although the system is flexible enough for game designers to use in any way they like, you can expect the games that use it to utilize the black and white buttons on the Xbox pad — one for open cursing (err... taunting) and the other for secret team-to-team communications.



The Ethernet socket also lets you turn your gaming experience into a party: Invite a host of Xbox pals, attach your systems together, and as many as 16 players can compete and cooperate on an instant, no-nonsense LAN (Local Area Network). The fact that the Xbox comes complete with four controller ports means that multiplayer games are also as easy as plugging in a pad.

And what a pad. Inside every Xbox package is a frighteningly delirious, fully-featured controller studded with six analog action buttons, two analog triggers, twin analog sticks, and, of course, an eight-way directional pad for when you have to kick it (ass, that is) old-school. Add to that a power cord and an AV cable, and you have an unbeatable box.

## Out of the Box

If you want to do more than play the highest quality videogames around, you can pick up the DVD Movie Playback Kit and turn your Xbox into the absolute center of your home-entertainment experience. The Xbox is the only videogame system to support HDTV and Progressive Scan (480p and 720p) for both gaming and DVD applications. So for your \$299 (and a little extra for the remote package) you get one of the most capable DVD players on Earth, and since your Xbox has four controller ports, you won't have to keep swapping between the remote and the game controller... unlike some other consoles we could mention.

So when you get tired of watching *The Matrix*, maybe it's time to be in *The Matrix*. Exclusive Xbox experiences, like Spielberg's *AI*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or the Bruce Lee game, will make every other console owner green with envy. You'll be green yourself as you bask in the comforting, hypnotic glow of the oh-so-green Xbox jewel.



## Totally Wired

The Xbox guys know that this system is a serious piece of equipment, and with that in mind, they've made it much more flexible in terms of connections than any console preceding it. Unique cables, called AV Packs, let you attach your Xbox to any home-entertainment center you can configure by allowing you to use your existing industry standard cables, such as S-Video, Composite AV, and even High Definition 1080i Component Video. The packs have built-in extension cables, adding physical flexibility to their already available electrical might. These AV Packs, as well as an RF adapter, System Link Cable, and a host of third-party accessories, will all be in stores when the system arrives on November 8.





*Official Xbox Magazine*

# Amazing machine needs amazing magazine



**S**o you've read about it, you've seen the screenshots, and you can't wait to get your hands on an Xbox. We can't blame you: it's a stunning piece of machinery. But if you want to really keep up to date on what's happening in the Xbox world, you'll have to check out the ultimate Xbox authority - the **Official Xbox Magazine** -

a magazine solely dedicated to bringing you the best news, reviews, interviews, and previews of jaw-dropping new Xbox software. We'll have the in-depth features, comprehensive reviews, and access that only the official magazine can offer. Paired with the Xbox Game Disc, our email newsletter, and website, it's the ultimate Xbox source.

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# Pearl Harbor: Defend the Fleet

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: WizardWorks  
■ Developer: Running Dog Software

All three of you out there who remember WizardWorks' Beach Head 2022 will find that Pearl Harbor: Defend the Fleet is exactly the same game in a different setting. For that matter, WizardWorks also has B-17 Gunner out right now, and this review could easily cover both.

To wit: This is a shooting gallery. We'd call it a "high-tech" shooting gallery, but the use of DirectX B-bounds qualifies. Wave after wave of Japanese planes (and occasionally sub) attack the fleet using A-less circling patterns, and you shoot them down. That's it. Over and over, until the fleet is eventually sunk.

The graphics are only barely functional, although it's worth noting in fairness that the framerate is rock steady. Your turret is controlled by the mouse, and you get a selection of different ammunition to play with, from a 50-cal machine gun to



■ Pearl Harbor is about as deep as the movie it's trying to cash in on — that is to say, not at all.

rockets — but really the differences among them hardly affects gameplay. It just takes fewer shots to bring down a plane using the 40mm cannon than the 20mm.

It's pretty mindless, and also more than a little mind-numbing — we can't imagine anyone playing this for more than five or 10 minutes. The game is "bargain"-priced at \$19.99, but frankly, even that's about twice the money it's actually worth. — Jeff Lundgren

## NextGen ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** Good for a waste of 10 minutes and \$20. That's about it.

# Tropico

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Gathering of Developers

■ Developer: PopTop Software  
Fetch your dark shades and fat Cuban cigars. Tropico, a delightful city builder, makes you El Presidente of your own island paradise.

On the surface, this game is loaded with sandy beaches, gentle ocean waves, and warm nights. But underneath lurks a dark world of political corruption and economic exploitation. You may be the boss of bosses, but if your people aren't happy, you can lose your island in the blink of a typhoon's eye.

You have a choice. To keep your people pacified, give them churches for their souls and farms for their bellies. Buy their love with schools, medical facilities, and decent salaries. Deal with their worries about crime, food, and their irrational desire for freedom.

Or choose the iron fist. Hire tough generals and raise an army. Arrest dissidents, increase taxes, shut down newspapers, and



■ Ever wanted to be a South American dictator? Well, Tropico gives you that chance

plunder the nation's coffers. You could still lose your job to free elections or armed uprisings. But if you've got money, you can spend it to buy votes. Or hell, just ship it off to your Swiss bank account and accept the inevitable.

Tropico tends to be slow, with no headlong-breaking clash of arms like other city builders, but there's enough innovation to give it charm. And yes, it's rated "Teen," but this is one the whole family can play. So don some gold braid, light a cigar, and give dictating a try. — John Lee

## NextGen ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** Think Age of Empires with banana daiquiris, casinos, and a Latin beat.

# Operation Flashpoint

■ Publisher: Codemasters ■ Developer: Bohemia Interactive

## Keeping it real



■ Hardcore military — that's the definition of Operation Flashpoint

Everyone wants to save the world. The problem is, most of us are too lazy. That's why publisher Codemasters commissioned developer Bohemia Interactive, a Prague-based team made up entirely of ex-Czech army regulars, to build a truly hardcore war sim.

In the Soviet Union in 1985, Gorbachev has been elected to power, but a rebel group refuses to accept his regime and has taken over an island community. So NVAO has been called in as a "peacekeeping force," and you join the mission to crush the resistance. The game lets you design your own strategy in a vast, open environment with no mission-specific parameters. The action is largely third-person, except when in Sniper mode or



plotting vehicles, and in fact the most obvious difference between Operation Flashpoint and sims like Hidden and Dangerous is the inclusion of a comprehensive range of hardware. This includes choppers, Jeeps, and tanks, and you can take over varied positions like driver, gunner, or navigator.

But the game's greatest strength is its overarching realism. Graphically, this sports an exceptional, consistent attention to detail, and the game mechanics

are just as clinical. You begin with the exact amount of ammo your weapon can hold and can only gain more from downed enemies.

However, if you're not into hardcore war sims, you won't like the slow buildup that often precedes action, or the distancing that modern hardware can often impose. For example, when piloting the helicopter, an authentic VR display means you don't even have to look at what you're shooting. — John Leaver



■ Careful, you can kill yourself with your own grenade

## NextGen ★★★★☆

**Bottom Line:** This is an extremely realistic sim. Its only major drawback is that the realism sometimes takes precedence over playability, and at times it will bore less-than-hardcore war gamers.



■ **Cartoon Vikings** and strategy gaming don't make the perfect marriage, but it ain't bad either

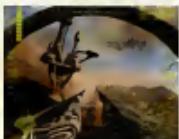
## Echelon

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Bethesda Softworks  
■ Developer: Buka Entertainment

Not quite an arcade-style space shooter and not quite a flight sim, Echelon hovers between two genres and does nothing particularly right or wrong. Russian developer Buka Entertainment has created a beautiful world for you to zip through, but it has left out too many other details in the flight plan.

The routine backstory features galactic invasion and human resistance fighters. The cut scenes are well done, but the in-game world features no characters to speak of and some rather ordinary tours of duty. The single-player campaign oscillates between boring escort missions, easy tank intercepts, and incredibly exciting, but difficult, dog-fights. And in the "It just ain't fair" category, enemy fighters retain their mobility even when nearly destroyed, but your ship slowly decays with every shot to the hull.

The Instant Action mode only



■ **Echelon** is worth a look but has some picky gameplay issues

has three rather paltry missions, and the multiplayer suffers the embarrassment of sometimes respawning your ship just before you hit a mountain. It all looks nice, but on a PIII700 with a GeForce2, there were serious clipping problems and occasional lock-ups.

The controls take some getting used to, as the mouse/keyboard support really isn't ideal. But once you get the hang of the action and turn off the annoying radio chatter, Echelon can be fun, if only for a little while.

— Jim Preston

## NextGen ★★★☆☆

**Bottom Line:** Credit to Buka for trying to combine two genres, but predictably it neither soars nor crashes.

## Half-Life: Blue Shift

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Sierra ■ Developer: Gearbox

The Half-Life 2 update is starting to look red and raw thanks to all the milking Sierra has been giving it. Just a few months after the unnecessary "Platinum Pak," Sierra offers up the ridiculous Half-Life: Blue Shift, a stand-alone game that was originally intended for Dreamcast.

In case you simply don't recall what graphics looked like in 1998, Blue Shift is helpfully here to remind you: it puts you into the donut-called hands of one of Black Mesa's security guards, but there's nothing remotely new or interesting in the game's sparse six to eight hours of gameplay.

Gearbox is a talented developer (they made the first Half-Life companion piece, Opposing Force, which is included on the Blue Shift CD) but it clearly wasn't given enough time to do anything special with this edition. The training level is exactly the same as the original, as are the weapons, enemies, and



■ **Sierra isn't careful, its Half-Life series might go the way of 3DO's Army Men franchise**

scientists. There is a high-definition texture pack that makes the NPCs look better but doesn't improve the rest of the world at all.

Beyond the dated visuals, though, is some very boring gameplay. There are few scripted events, but many of them are poorly done, with invulnerable soldiers standing stock-still until you enter their proximity. There is no final showdown with anyone at all, and we were able to complete the adventure on the second go-round in less than 90 minutes. Don't bother.

— Jim Preston

## NextGen ★★★☆☆

**Bottom Line:** If you want more Half-Life, skip this "game" and hunt online for Neil Manke's excellent (and free) *They Hunger* mod, or *Day of Defeat* (also free).



■ Does the world really need cute Vikings?

## NextGen ★★★☆☆

**Bottom Line:** The gameplay may be plentiful, but Viking reputations will suffer.

## Cultures

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Funatics

### It's My Little Viking

→ Lovable Vikings? Quick! Odin, lock the gates of Valhalla before Ragnarök comes and our reputation are ruined.

It's true. THQ and German developer Funatics have whipped up a nifty Viking sim that puts you in charge of a New World colony of cuddly barbarians — tough little cartoon men and women with names like Leif, Sven, and Freja.

The story starts as Viking villagers suffer a cold, cruel rainy season that blots out the sun and wrecks their harvest. The sun abruptly appears, but it turns out to be a comet, and it splits into pieces that vanish in different directions. Our Vikings take this as a good omen and have off to find the chunks. And that, of course, is how they end up in the Americas, centuries ahead of that Johnny-come-lately Christopher Columbus.

Once they're ashore,

a strategy and resource management game, but it hits all the right notes, and it's more than competently executed.

The graphics are vivid, and the cartoonish Vikings are bearable. Some missions are a little slow-going, but there are plenty of them. You get tutorials, a story-driven campaign, five open-ended games for beginners, and 11 stand-alone scenarios, plus multiplayer options.

If only the Vikings weren't so cute. Oh, well. Maybe, this one time, we'll let them sneak into Valhalla.

— John Lee



■ Does the world really need cute Vikings?

## NextGen ★★★☆☆

**Bottom Line:** The gameplay may be plentiful, but Viking reputations will suffer.

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# Letters

## Write makes might

→ Is it just me (I hope), or did *WipeOut* Fusion vaporize with the arrival of the year 2001? I couldn't find anything on SCEE's web site, and all the latest previews seem to predate January 2001. I hope it's not (gulp) cancelled. Any information you can provide to this *WipeOut* fanatic would be most appreciated.

\*x0dara\*  
Via email

Fear not, gentle reader, for *WipeOut* Fusion was on display at E3, looking... well, a lot like *WipeOut*. It's still gunning for a release later this year.

It was good to see John Dondzila and Carl Farhan getting some well-deserved recognition in your pages, but you missed a lot of Atari 2600-related activity. First is Stellarist, a mailing list dedicated to programming the 2600. A lot of hobbyists have been through there. See: [www.biglist.com/lists/stellar/](http://www.biglist.com/lists/stellar/)

Second, a lot of them rely on Hozer Video Games to actually make their cartridges. Check them out at: [www.netway.com/~hozervideo/atari2600.html](http://www.netway.com/~hozervideo/atari2600.html).

Then there's Eric Bacher and Igor Barzilai, who have released

three games so far, and there are a couple they haven't yet. For more info: [www.ebvision.com](http://www.ebvision.com)

And even then there were a few other hobbyist games missed, like Joe Zbiciak's 4-TRIS for Intellivision, Kevin Horton's Kevtris for ColecoVision, Christopher Tumber's Omega Chase for Vectrex, and others.

Russ Perry Jr.  
Via email

Thanks for the tip, Russ.

I heard that Xbox will not have a regional lockout. Does this mean that it will play DVDs from other regions as well?

Timothy Bullock  
Via email

We don't know where you might have heard such a thing, but Xbox will have a regional lockout for both DVDs and games. The DVD regional lockout (or lack thereof) isn't up to Microsoft anyway. All manufacturers of DVDs and DVD equipment must comply with international lockout rules to keep their licenses — something that got Sony into hot water with the first generation of PS2s, which shipped with a bug that could circumvent DVD regional codes.

I've been enthusiastically reading your magazine for quite a while, and it provides hours of insightful news and entertainment. What I wish Next Gen had, however, was a list of games that would be coming out the following month. I hope you take my idea into consideration!

\*RempSao\*  
Via email

Not a bad idea, but unfortunately, it's rather unworkable and wouldn't provide you, the reader, with much benefit. Ship dates in this industry are notoriously fluid and subject to change, and combined with our two-month lead time, any list we could print would be woefully inaccurate and hence mostly useless. But for slightly more up-to-date and accurate release dates, check out [www.ebworld.com](http://www.ebworld.com), [www.gonegold.com](http://www.gonegold.com), and Next Gen reviewer Rob Smolka's own [www.consollegold.com](http://www.consollegold.com), which should be up and running by the time this issue is printed.

Over the years I started to notice this trend. It started with the breakup of the wrestling group Degeneration X. Next was the fall in popularity of X-Pac. Then came the XFL, which — how do

you say? — oh yes, flopped. All of these X things pushed a lot of hype, but delivered very little, and they all failed. I call this the X Curse. I just wonder if Xbox will have the same fate?

Jeffrey Jamison  
Via email

Interesting. One comment overheard at E3 was an industry veteran who, on hearing the opinion that, although Microsoft seemed to be stumbling a bit lately at least they were in it for the long haul with Xbox, snorted and said, "Yeah, well that's what NBC said about the XFL." At Next Gen we're quite a bit more optimistic.

I'm hopeful that you will regularly keep Game Boy Advance coverage as a feature in Next Gen. After all, it is the next generation of handheld gaming, and with its ability to connect with the GameCube, it deserves regular coverage. Keep up the great work.

Gary J. Sella  
Via email

Thanks, Gary, but sorry. Next Gen simply has never had regular coverage of handheld consoles, and likely never will. We will, of course, cover Game Boy Advance features in reviews and previews, as it relates to specific GameCube games that make use of such features. Also, when something newsworthy concerning GBA comes up, you can expect a news story to follow it.

When I read about Indrema, my first thought was "fame." But when I read more about it I thought, "Holy crap, this is a great idea!" So I decided that I would sell my Dreamcast with all its games for about \$300 dollars. I already had a PlayStation 2, and GameCube didn't sound like it was worth it. And then I read that Indrema has been cancelled! (That same week I also found

## TOO REAL (OR JUST TOO STRANGE)?

The *Final Fantasy* movie certainly seems to bring new meaning to the term "state-of-the-art computer graphics."



Want to know how diehard a gamer I am? I rented *Charlie's Angels* just so I could watch the *Final Fantasy* movie trailer. Boy, *Charlie's Angels* sucked, but the trailer was worth the \$4.50 rental price. I showed the trailer to my friend and she still disagrees that it is all CGI! She says it's a mix of CGI and actors, because CGI can't look that real. Man, some people just can't embrace technology. (Personally, I look forward to the year 2049, when robots rule the world and humans are their servants. Sure the servant

part sucks, but when all the robots look like Nikki Cox who can possibly complain?)

Brian Preston  
Via email

Um, OK. We're glad you enjoyed the *FF* trailer, Brian. And don't be so hard on your friend. We've come a long way since *Tron*. Motion capture and high-res rendering — not to mention thousands of hours in post-production to make everything look just so — can fool anyone these days. Scary huh?

out that EA cancelled *The World Is Not Enough* for PS2, which I had reserved at EB — bad week.) R.I.P. Indrema... sob... Since the Indrema was cancelled I've decided that I am going to buy GameCube, but I don't know how much it is going to cost, so do you guys know? And when is GameCube being released?

"todd"

Via email

Once again, GameCube will be released in the U.S. on Nov. 5 — a scant three days before Xbox launches on Nov. 8 — at a price of \$199. But although Indrema is dead, another Linux-based console, TuxBox ([www.tuxbox-project.com](http://www.tuxbox-project.com)), soldiers on, even though it's in even earlier conceptual stages than Indrema was. And while we're at it, although EA cancelled *The World Is Not Enough*, they do have *James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire* coming this year, which looks terrific. So perk up, little camper.

I have been a loyal reader since issue two, and I must tell you that overall I enjoy your magazine, but I have to question some of your fact checking (or lack thereof). In the *Star Wars* games retrospective (NG 06/01), some platforms for which certain games were released were missing from several entries, as well as all Game Boy titles. The original *Star Wars* arcade game also came out for Amiga as well as Atari ST (yes, these machines were sold in the U.S.), as did *Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back* and *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*. C64 was not the only recipient of these fine games. Plus, you neglected to note that *X-Wing* and *Dork Forces* were available for Macintosh, and failed altogether to mention the add-ons for PC (*B-Wing*, etc.).

Phil Borro

Via email

Two things: One, we don't regularly cover Game Boy, so in the interest of space these were not included. Second, we did mention *B-Wing* and other expansion packs, in the category "Expansion Packs" listed under each title that had them. We do apologize for failing to mention the Mac versions of *Dork Forces*, *X-Wing*, and also *TIE Fighter*.

## STAR WARS WARS

After reading your preview of GameCube's *Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II*, I completely expect a five-star rating from you when it's released. Don't get me wrong — I don't think it deserves such a rating, but it seems as if you're sold on it already. Actually I can't see anything groundbreaking here. It has a paalty II levels, no multiplayer mode, and before you can say "Starfighter," it has a "unique new way" of commanding wingmen using the D-pad. Where did they get that idea? Oh, and you can't even explore the galaxy à la *Freelancer*. In fact the only thing this game has is a great graphics engine paired with a cool license.

Charlie Gormley

Via email

The *Rogue Squadron II* article in NG 06/01 literally brought a tear to my eye. No joke — an article in a videogame magazine almost had me in tears. I know everyone who reads this will probably make fun of me, but damn, that was an amazing piece of journalism. *Star Wars*

is quite possibly the film that first birthed my dreams of becoming a filmmaker, and when the last paragraph said, "We'll really know what it feels like to be Luke Skywalker" and, "This isn't just the beauty of a next-generation GameCube game — it is the realized, certifiable magic that is this medium," it literally made my eyes tear up. Suddenly, 18 years of playing videogames ran through my head, and I realized why I love them so much. This really is what videogames are all about. It isn't about holding a piece of plastic in your hand and moving an object on a TV screen; it's about transplanting you into an X-Wing in a galaxy far, far away. Videogames aren't a stupid playing; they are magic. *Next Gen* has finally given a clear reason why we play these games — because they are pure magic.

Charlie Wood

Via email

Charlie, meet Charlie. Charlie, this is Charlie. "Two men enter, one man leaves..."

Opinions seem slightly divided about our coverage of *Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II*.



(which you failed to catch but we also missed, so we'll go ahead and point it out) — that truly was an oversight. As near as we were able to determine, however, while Amiga and Atari ST may have been available in the U.S., the versions of the original *Star Wars* game for those systems (licensed to and produced by Domark, a U.K. company) were not. No doubt a few copies found their way here anyway, but they weren't generally available.

that content. Sure, I know how to manage a hard drive, but does the mass-market consumer? What happens when the drive gets full? Is there going to be a certain amount of space that only developers can access? If so, how much will be blocked?

Aaron Hettlinger

Riverside, CA

Essentially, the Xbox hard drive will wind up working a lot like a contiguous (nothing blocked off) 8GB memory card. With a graphical interface to make deleting old data easy for non-tech-savvy users, it should be fairly straightforward. As you noted, 8GB isn't a lot by today's standards, but we'll reserve judgment until we have a working model.

## CORRECTIONS

In NG 06/01, page 85, in our review of *Rumble Racing* for PS2 we listed the publisher and developer as Konami. *Rumble Racing* was published and developed by EA Games.

In NG 07/01, page 55, in our *Jak and Daxter* cover story, the last line of the story was accidentally deleted. The final sentence should have read, In its entirety:

Nughty Dog's perfectionist nature and dedication to the craft of gameplay should prove that *Jak and Daxter* will, just as *Crash* did before them, win audiences the world over.

— Tom Russo

I have some questions about the Xbox hard drive. Everyone's talking about how you can download movies, music, extra levels, characters, not to mention Web surfing and downloads from the Internet. Plus, Microsoft tells us the hard drive will enhance the gaming experience in ways never before imagined. This is all well and good, but the drive is only 8GB. That may seem like a lot, but it will fill up fast with all

## Next Generation Letters,

150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005.

Email us: [ngonline@imaginemedia.com](mailto:ngonline@imaginemedia.com)

Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred



# Retroview

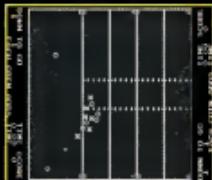
## August 1978

Space Invaders take over the arcades, and Atari digs in at home

→ The Atari 2600 VCS had suffered a difficult Christmas in 1977, and founder Nolan Bushnell's heart was just no longer with the company. Late in the year, Ray Kassar would take over as CEO, signaling Atari's entry into the home computer market.

Competing consoles suffered as well. The Bally Professional Arcade was torpedoed by inept marketing and the fact that an outlandish percentage of units shipped turned out to be defective. This forced Bally, an arcade manufacturer with little retail infrastructure, to deal with the returns.

In Japanese arcades, however, a storm was brewing. Taito had released a videogame called Space Invaders. The game featured a lone cannon at the bottom of the screen, defending against wave after wave



■ Atari's Football introduced the trackball controller and was the first game with a scrolling background.

of aliens, which descended methodically toward the surface. It was so popular that Japan experienced a shortage of the coin used to play the game. Midway purchased the U.S. rights, and the game exploded onto the scene in October (the same time as Atari's trackball-controlled Football). U.S. arcades were never the same again.

SPECIAL REPORT! Why the Bally Professional Arcade isn't selling

# Next Gen

Next Generation Magazine

WE MADE CONTACT!

## SPACE INVADERS

THIS REVOLUTIONARY GAME WILL CHANGE THE INDUSTRY FOREVER

PLUS: The Complete Guide to Magnavox's Odyssey

EXCLUSIVE SCOOP:

### MATTEL'S MAKING A CONSOLE?

Read it here first!

### 42 GAMES REVIEWED!

Atari 2600  
Bally  
Human  
Bioshock  
Mattel  
Astro Blaster  
Basketball  
Gunfight

ARCADE ■ APPLE ■ BALLY ■ ODYSSEY ■ ATARI ■ TRS-80 ■ MATTEL

## What we were playing

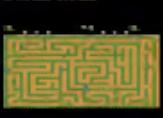
Who needs polygons when you've got sprites?

### NIGHT DRIVER



■ Platform: Atari 2600  
■ Publisher: Atari

### MAZE CRAZE



■ Platform: Atari 2600  
■ Publisher: Atari

### TURTLES



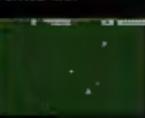
■ Platform: Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
■ Publisher: Magnavox

### SHOWDOWN IN 2100 A.D.



■ Platform: Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
■ Publisher: Magnavox

### SPACE WAR



■ Platform: Atari 2600  
■ Publisher: Atari

## Top 5 movies of 1978 (domestic)

Grease



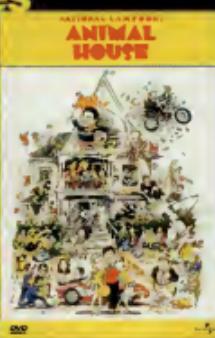
Animal House



Superman



Every Which Way But Loose



Jaws 2

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## ...and in the real world

■ Jim Davis' comic strip Garfield, which portrays the daily life of a fat, lazy, gluttonous, and abusive orange tiger kitty, enters syndication. Garfield would immediately become the idol of every man in America.

■ Atlantic City, NJ votes to become home of the first legal gambling casino in the U.S. not located in Nevada. Millions of people are relieved to discover they no longer have to drive across the country to throw their money away.

■ NASA launches the Pioneer Venus Orbiter and multiprobe to collect data on the planet Venus. The mission studies the planet's surface and atmosphere, which is over 96% carbon dioxide, has an

average temperature of 867 degrees Fahrenheit, sports thick clouds composed of sulfuric acid, and is roughly 92 times more dense than that of Earth.

■ Happy Days' Richie Cunningham makes an unusual friend in the form of Mork from Ork, played by the one and only Robin Williams. The character would return with his own series, *Mork & Mindy*, in the fall of 1978.

■ Ninth-grade dropout, publishing magnate, and future first-amendment defender Larry Flynt is shot outside a Georgia courthouse, supposedly because an interracial photo spread in *Playboy* magazine angered the gunman. Flynt survives, but is paralyzed from the waist down.





PlayStation 2

# twisted metal



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# FULL-FRONTAL FEAR.



Celebrate the 5th anniversary of the most terrifying game series ever. Join Claire Redfield, as she searches for her missing brother, Chris, and digs deeper into the evil doings of Umbrella Corp. Flesh-eating zombies and bio-tech monstrosities haunt Claire's every move. As an added bonus, this special edition includes Wesker's Report. This exclusive DVD gives you a horrific retrospective glimpse into the mind of the mysterious Wesker and the terrifying events that is Resident Evil.

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PlayStation 2

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GameCube: Biohazard ■ Tekken 4 ■ Resident Evil: The Movie ■ Virtua Fighter 4

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves ■ Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D ■ Virtua Fighter 4